



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

37.

487.



37.

487.

THE SQUIRE.

—

VOL. I.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY SAMUEL BENTLEY,
Dorset Street, Fleet Street.

THE SQUIRE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“THE HEIRESS,” “THE MERCHANT’S DAUGHTER,” &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1837.

487.



THE SQUIRE.

CHAPTER I.

It was a dull November afternoon. The mist hung heavily on the distant hills and above the intervening hollows. The sun, sinking in the west, lent no glory to the closing day, but seemed creeping to its rest in gloom and heaviness, as if ashamed that its might had not dispelled the fog—that its noon-day splendour had been obscured. No wonder that it hid its face! the vanquished do not like to be looked on! and there cannot be even the semblance of glory in being conquered by a fog. The present defeat resembled genius overthrown by stupidity!—borne down by the mere dull, animal weight of wealth! No wonder that the sun crept to its rest with a

stealthy step and a shrouded face ! If it could not conquer in the heyday of its might, its only wisdom was to retire as speedily and quietly as the laws of nature would admit. That noxious vapours should have the power to darken brightness ! It is sad, but very true. Only Chinese pictures have no shade ; and though they may be “ *selon la fantaisie*,”—that is, Chinese “ *fantaisie*,”—they are certainly not “ *selon la nature*,”—that is, English nature.

Not that those who discriminate the weather closely, and affect accuracy in the description of its various varieties, would have pronounced it to be a fog : they would only have declared it to be a misty day, leaving it to the less cautious or more impatient to add, dull, heavy, chilling, and unbearable.

Dull, heavy, chilling, it certainly was, though not unbearable ; such things have been borne before—must be borne again ; but, to my judgment, (and I rather pique myself on its correctness—who does not ?) it was more dull, more heavy, more chilling, than would have

been a dense, unsightless fog. There is something partaking of the sublime in a real, indisputable fog. When nothing can be seen, all things may be imagined : beauties and defects—the grandeur of nature, the littleness of art—the striking outlines of the uncultivated mountain, the petty details of this work-a-day world, are all hidden from our view ; the blind and the seeing, the observing and the heedless, are brought nearly on a level : none can distinguish more than ten yards in advance, and man sees (pardon the Irishism) how narrow and bounded are his views. It seems as though his mortal course was run, and he had gained nothing by his toil and trouble. He looks back : all is objectless, obscure ; there is no vestige of his labours gleaming through the mist—his very steps untraced upon the earth. The monument erected to his sorrows, and the triumphal arch to his glories, are alike lost in the gloom. His joys and his griefs have left no trace : he has felt—he has laughed—he has mourned : perhaps he had wealth—had genius—had do-

minion—and deemed himself a glorious being ! Where are the trophies of his glory ? They are hidden from his view ; his gaze cannot pierce the gloom : there are no visible proofs of his triumphs ; they are as nothing in the eyes of others—even his own eye cannot mark them. He learns a juster estimate of himself—he forms a truer judgment of his deeds.—He looks before : how bounded is his view ! He cannot pierce the gloom—he cannot see into the future—he trembles at its unseen perils. Woe to him who would trace its obscurity without a safer guide than man's unaided reason !

The history of his own past is traced on memory's roll—the characters cannot be obliterated ; but the tale is lost to others—unknown to multitudes, as the past history of those countless crowds is lost—unknown to him. The grosser part of his nature receives a shock to its pride, and he better understands his worth in the universe—his comparative relation to the Unseen and Infinite. Yet the veil of the

past shall be withdrawn—the deeds of each stand clearly forth—man's most secret thoughts be bared to the gaze of the countless hosts marshalled before the eternal throne for judgment ; he shall hear his doom, whilst applauding crowds proclaim the sentence just,—the righteous award of One who has said he will judge man by his acts, whether they be good or whether they be evil, and who has promised that none shall be lost but those who will not come to him. The evil of the hereafter rests justly on man's own head. Let us think of this in the early dawn—at the sunset hour—in the noon-day glow and the midnight gloom—in joy and sorrow—in sickness and in health—in low estate, and in lofty rank.

The veil of the future, too, will be withdrawn, though mortal eye cannot pierce it now. Those splendours too dazzling for our gaze, too glorious for our comprehension, will then be revealed,—the mysteries of our heavenly Father's love be then made plain ; and

they who have, even here, seen something of its beauty and its power, through faith and hope, will then rejoice and adore.

Was ever fog so moralised upon before?—we imagine not. This is an age of wonders : the dull may see nothing in a fog but a fog (for the race of non-seers is numerous); the anticipative and impatient, only a very disagreeable check to some pleasurable excursion. Now, a fog is frequently disappointing, rarely agreeable; yet do we maintain that a real, sightless, *bonâ fide* fog—such as may be seen, perhaps, once in a winter, (once is quite often enough,) has some touch of the sublime.

But, we repeat, it was not a fog this sixth day of November 177—. The murky sky, the heavy mist, hanging about on hill and valley, hinted that it might have been a fog in the morning—that it might be a fog again at night; but a fog—that is, a sublime fog—at that moment it certainly was not. Objects could be distinguished near, and even in the distance, though not clearly : it was neither all gloom nor all shine; in fact, it had no affinity

with the latter ; and to say that it was neither wet nor dark, was the utmost the most courteous could report in its favour. If one was neither afraid of being drenched nor benighted, at least there was no beauty, no variety of colouring, no changing and striking lights to awaken admiration. There was no break in the heavens—no lights on the earth ; the forms that were visible were indistinct—traced, as it seemed, with the timid and confused touch of a beginner.

Had a landscape-painter (unable to depict the human form) wished to image stupidity and weariness in a representation of soulless nature, here was the model to his hand. You could not even hope that a ray from genius might enlighten the uniform dulness :—you might believe it had tried, and failed. The heaviness seemed determined : there was no room for speculation on the subject ; there it was, and the conviction was forced upon you that there it would be :—you might almost imagine it eternal. Nature seemed out of humour, —not in a rage, (that partakes of the sublime,)

—not even petulant, (that promises change,)
—but sullen.

The thermometer would not have justified a very violent declamation against the cold, or a smothering quantity of furs ; but the heart felt it was cold,—very cold,—chilling, benumbing ; not so absolutely freezing as to command a bold effort to bear it,—that would have caused a little excitement, (petty vexations, winning little glory for their well-bearing, are rarely well borne ;) but the air seemed chilling, paralyzing the fancy with its torpid touch, painting the future in gloom to the mental eye as the surrounding landscape was already painted to the bodily : in short, it was one of those days on which one feels wretched—wretched without a hope of relief,—without the power to avert the doom, or lighten its cruelty. The best remedy for such a tyranny is to sleep, if you can ;—at least so seemed to think one of the occupants of the travelling-chaise winding slowly up a dreary hill in a thinly-inhabited part of an inland county. Snugged up in one corner, his hat laid aside that his head might rest

more comfortably against the cushioned back, his fair, handsome, open countenance, occasionally twitched into slight contortions with the vagaries of sleep, and entirely heedless of his young companion, cuddled up in the other corner, reclined Philip Conyers, called by the villagers "The Squire;" by his friends, (enemies he had none, or so he thought,) "Honest Phil Conyers,"—the kindest hearted and the most hospitable host, the hardest drinker, the most daring rider, the most generous and unsuspicious of men, though withal a little quick at times: but then the breeze was over on the instant, and the bosom as unruffled as before.

It was the very last sort of day to choose for returning home,—all looking so dull and heavy might induce a fancy of not being welcome; but Philip Conyers had no fancy, and paid little heed to the gloom: it had only made him sleepy. Not so his gentle companion: she had seen little notable in reality,—her years had been few. Life might be said to her to be all fancy, and she felt as if she were unwelcome: unsympathised with, she undoubtedly

was. She bent forward, looked on the handsome and prepossessing features of the sleeper, so indicative of his frank and generous temper, then with a sigh shrank more closely into the corner, and forgot the present whilst dwelling on the past.

“Tally ho! hark forward!” shouted the squire, with a view-holla that must have awakened the seven sleepers of the Eastern tale, (if anything could,) starting from his uneasy slumber, and dashing down the side glass to look out, regardless of the cold raw air, or the alarm and surprise of his timid daughter.

Ear and eye were exercised in vain; he heard only the creaking of the wheels as the carriage was slowly dragged up the wearying hill,—saw only the difficult ascent before him.

“Did not you hear the hounds, Mabel?” he inquired, turning to his gentle child, who had not recovered from the effects of his sudden burst and startling holla.

“No, sir,” replied Mabel in a voice tremulous from emotion.

Her father looked at her for an instant, and out again on the dull hill; then pulling up the glass as hastily as he had dashed it down, muttered something of his having dreamt, for it was no hunting day,—adding, as some sort of apology for his slumber, that he felt heavy, not being used to a carriage, striving at the same time to keep his eyes open, in which with great difficulty he succeeded. His companion made no reply, his words requiring none, and there was silence till they gained the summit of the hill. Here the squire again put down the glass, but, with a more gentle action, again thrust his head from the window, directing her attention to some distant object, his countenance brightening with the prospect of a speedy deliverance from the confinement of the carriage, as well as with the kindly idea that he could entertain his fellow-traveller.

“You say you forget your home, Mabel,—there it stands in the distance; and well does the old grange look too, with its gable ends and its tall chimneys.—Not there, child,—this side. Can’t you see? Why you really have

forgotten your home!" he added impatiently, as, forgetting that his outstretched head prevented all view from one window, he marvelled at his daughter's stupidity in looking from the other.

She could not deny the charge of having forgotten the situation of the Grange, or rather of not knowing it, (she had not been there since her third year;) but, without offering any defence, she turned her gaze in the direction to which he pointed. Unhappily her eyes were dimmed with weeping, or she was not naturally far-sighted, or her father, knowing the direction in which the Grange was situated, fancied he saw what might be, rather than what really was seen.

"I believe the girl does not see it now," he continued, more impatiently, on Mabel's making no remark on the beauty of the Grange, as he had expected, though she continued to look in the right direction.

No wonder he was a little provoked. People who will not see what they ought to see are the most annoying of travelling-companions: the

iron cage would be too light a doom for their stupidity.

“Do you see it, Mabel?”

“I think I see something in the distance,” replied his daughter hesitatingly; for Mabel was the most sincere of human beings, and would not even in the matter of sight-seeing be guilty of a falsehood.

“Think you see something in the distance! So do I,—two crows on a fallow field, and an idiot boy driving a donkey. Have you quite forgotten your home, Mabel Conyers? My poor sister should have taught you better. I never forgot her at Christmas.”

“I left it so very young, sir,—so long since. My poor aunt ever taught me to love you and the Grange.”

“Ay, ay; I forgot you were but a baby then, and a sickly one too. I dare say, poor Eliza did all that was right,” replied her father kindly, shamed from his impatience by her tremulous tones, and eager to check the falling tears. “I am quick of temper: never heed my impatience, but dry your eyes. My sister was as kind a

creature as ever lived : she was too good for this world, and she is gone to a better ; but you have a fond father still left !—Come, cheer up, and I will show you the Grange, and everything else worth seeing,” drawing her towards him and kissing her pale cheek as he spoke.

Mabel did try to cheer up and seem grateful for his intended kindness, though that kindness (the rude touching of a recent wound) pained more than it soothed ; whilst she looked with a shudder at the deeply-rutted and miry road, and the dreary landscape round — forming so great a contrast to the level ways and smiling scenery encircling the abode she had so lately quitted. By dint of pointing out a hill to the left, a clump to the right, and directing the eye exactly as the finger pointed over some intervening objects, Mr. Conyers succeeded in making his child at least believe that she saw the Grange ; and her assurance of the fact pleased and satisfied him. This accomplished, his next task was to warn her against impatience, as they were yet some miles distant and the road was tedious. There was nothing

worth seeing at present, but he would point out the village as soon as it came in sight.

Another glance at the execrable road, and some unmannerly jolts as they descended the hill and crept slowly round its base in the valley below, proved the wisdom of his warning against impatience. After thanking him for his promise, the daughter and her father again sank into their respective corners and their former silence. The one thought of the inspiring chase, the sagacious hound, the swift hunter, and the gay carouse; the other thought of the warm heart, now cold, who had been as a mother to her—the small but fairy-like abode she had quitted, the one parent whom she had never known, and the other whom, from long absence and a contrast in every taste, she respected rather than loved, and, notwithstanding all his kindness, feared. The thoughts of the one were cheering; the thoughts of the other, saddening.

Mrs. Conyers (the most timid and gentle of beings), long drooping, had died soon after the birth of Mabel, who was supposed to inherit the delicate constitution of her mother. What

could Mr. Conyers do with a sickly female infant? With the kindest of hearts, he was certainly not the best qualified in the world to rear a delicate child or form female manners, and readily did he consent to his dying wife's request of consigning Mabel to the charge of his only sister, a maiden lady but one year younger than himself—the only old maid, as he declared, whom he could ever endure; and he almost considered her as a widow. Faithfully had the aunt fulfilled the charge she had undertaken, and justly did her pupil value her love and care.

If her ideas were tinged with what the world of that day and of this would call romance;—if she still dreamt of gallant gentlemen and peerless dames, after the multitude had awakened from the delusion; if she still thought that love, as they tell in the olden time, might live unchanged, unchilled, through a long, long life, amid the deprivations of poverty and the luxuries of prosperity;—still the same, or but more pure, more holy, though the storm or the pestilence swept the loved one from the earth;—

surely the coldest, the most reasonable, will pardon her when the tale of her early life shall be told — the most ultra utilitarian will check his sneer.

Few were more loved and lovely — more courted and admired, or more worthy of all this, than Elizabeth Conyers. The love sought by many was early bestowed on one, and the hand was promised where the heart had long been given. Who might not have envied Elizabeth Conyers at the age of twenty ! There was no earthly blessing that was not hers in possession, or in promise ! With birth, fortune, beauty, gentleness, and firmness joined ; esteemed by all ; loving and beloved by one ; who should think of dangers in her onward path ? — who should predict of sorrow to her future life ? The bridal week was come ; — two more days, and the gentle Elizabeth would plight her faith at the altar.

“ Two more days, and you will be mine, — wholly mine ! — mine only ! ” whispered the lover to the blushing girl as he bade her farewell, mounting his horse that had long been ready

to convey him to the nearest town for the purpose of effecting some last arrangement.

The lover rode forth in the morning, rich in every blessing, buoyant with health, exulting in his high hopes, rejoicing in the love, the virtues, and the beauty of his intended bride. Life, hope, delight, in every look and movement, each so vivid—what should check them? Ere night came, the active limbs were still—the lightsome laugh was hushed—the happy smile departed! The bounding heart no longer beat—the rounded cheek no longer glowed—he lay on his bier cold, silent, pale! He had passed from life in the power of his youth and beauty! He had not faded by a slow decay—the destroyer had touched him, and he had fallen! In the morning he had been full of life;—before evening came, he was the prey of death! He had been thrown from his horse, and so seriously injured that within three hours he was a corpse! The hand of his Elizabeth was held in his dying grasp!—his only articulate words were a hope of their future reunion!

It was long before Miss Conyers recovered from the shock ;—some thought she never did. The gaiety of youth was gone for ever ; but a gentle, holy sweetness had succeeded, a thousand times more touching. She did not withdraw from society, but entered rarely into its gayer scenes. She was kind and gentle to all ; but none again proffered hand and heart, though some would gladly have done so, had not her manner fully proved that her love still lingered with the dead.

There was much in the character of Mrs. Conyers and the circumstances attending her marriage to engage the love and sympathy of her gentle sister-in-law, who soothed the dying mother, and loved the child, first for that mother's sake, but soon more for its own. Miss Conyers took the little Mabel to her own quiet and tasteful home, situated in a more polished and beautiful county, lavishing on her the care and fondness of her warm and noble heart. She fancied a slight resemblance in the fair child to her lost lover, to whom her mother was very distantly related, and thus transferred to

her some portion of the affection which had been bestowed on him.

For the two succeeding years she took the little Mabel to her father ; and then, as if by mutual consent, and to their mutual relief, these annual visits were relinquished, though brother and sister continued to assign plausible reasons for the discontinuance ; and the former frequently talked of running down to Ivy Cottage when the hay was in, or the harvest done, or the hunting over, or something else concluded, which was always succeeded by something else to be completed, before he could leave home. Though really attached, (an attachment ever proved in essentials,) the tastes, the habits, the ideas of the brother and sister were so totally opposed, that each felt restraint in the presence of the other. The ill-ordered house of the widower—his jovial companions—his kind, but rather rough and noisy manners, little suited the gentle and retiring Elizabeth, her natural gaiety sobered by early suffering, her health never completely restored, her spirit sublimed by her still cherished love for one lost to her upon earth.

Philip Conyers was kind-hearted, generous, and hospitable, incapable of a mean or dishonourable action,—a good specimen of the country squire of that day. He was an easy landlord and master, harsh only to poachers and vagrants, always ready to assist the unfortunate when it did not interfere with hunting, shooting, or his more than due abhorrence of foreign habits and innovations; a bold rider, a hearty eater, and a hard drinker, according to the fashion of the times. Never was a more stanch supporter of old customs. He always voted for the blue member, because his family had done so before him. To crown all, he was a great cheerer at the toast of Church and State, without clearly understanding its meaning, and, unhappily, without thinking of, far less practising, the duties required from a member of that church he valued and toasted, not for its beautiful liturgy or its apostolic doctrine, but because it had been the religion of his fathers, was that of his neighbours and connexions, and that he had been brought up in its outward ordinances, and entertained some

confused idea that its downfall would be connected with some temporal loss to himself,—perhaps a deprivation of hunting, or a scarcity of wine. To go to the village church, when not very inconvenient, and make his servants do the same,—to have mince pies at Christmas, salt fish on Good Friday, pay his tithes with only a low grumble, or a joke on the parson, who was rarely seen in the parish but on Sunday,—was sufficient, in his estimation, to mark him as a worthy member of the church.

It was sad to think that one with so much natural kindness of disposition should have passed the age of fifty with scarcely a care for his eternal welfare, assenting to the necessity of faith in a Saviour as a mere dogma, instead of feeling the immensity of that Saviour's love and striving to acquire an interest in his sacrifice. If an idea that he must render an account of the talents committed to his charge ever came across him, it was speedily dismissed as unpleasant—he never dwelt on unpleasant things. He defrauded none, he employed and gave to

many. What more could be required? Of the corruption of the human heart—of the necessity of self-denial—of acts being judged by their principles, whether proceeding from the love of God, or the desire of the applause of men, or the mere ridding oneself of importunity and the sight of pain, he knew nothing—he never inquired.

The constant companion of her aunt, Mabel had imbibed most of her opinions, and strongly resembled her in character. Gentle, yielding, believing all as guileless as herself, she was naturally inclined to trust, to love, and to endeavour to contribute to the happiness of all she met; but, timid and sensitive, she shrank back abashed at the least semblance of rebuke or harshness. Her heart bounded at a smile, felt crushed beneath a frown. Elizabeth Conyers was no prodigy of learning; but, a recluse in her later years, from delicate health, she had found pleasure in cultivating Mabel's taste for the literature of the past, and then present age; and if she had no great depth of thought to bring to the task, she had a delicate and taste-

ful mind, with a feeling heart, keenly alive to the good and the beautiful. In these her niece resembled her :—both had the poetry of the heart—the romance of life was still bright in each : the one as yet knew not its reality ; the other, in consecrating herself to the memory of the dead, had few thoughts to bestow on the petty trials, the follies, and the vices of the living. One was enshrined in her heart, and for his sake all others were thought well of. He had died in the full splendour of their love !—nor time, nor doubt, nor chance, nor change, had marred its beauty : she deemed it might have lived long years unfaded from its pristine glory. She told of this love to the gentle Mabel ; and she too indulged in dreams as bright.

If Mabel were ever to mingle in the crowd—to endure the wear and tear of life, other and sterner lessons might have been useful ; the more particularly, considering her father's character. But such lessons she heard not. Her aunt was too much attached to her brother to see that brother exactly as he was. Time

and absence had obliterated the feeling approaching to disgust with which she had encountered some of his companions,—had softened the remembrance of the contrast between them,—and whilst teaching her niece to love and respect her unknown parent, in her affection she painted him as what she wished to consider him, as she desired he should be, rather than as what he was. To Mabel's fancy, therefore, this unknown parent was endowed with innumerable graces of thought and feeling, and his idea blended with that of her aunt's lost lover. This was unfortunate, as it made the contrast, when she saw him, the more striking and overwhelming. She felt that she had bestowed the love and duty of a child on an ideal parent: felt it at their first meeting, when they stood beside the bed of the dying, who, deprived of speech by a paralytic stroke, could but look her affection and her hopes,—could but sign her wishes. Her aunt's sudden attack had been Mabel's first real grief, and her instant idea was to send for her father, judging from her own

feelings how much he would desire a last meeting with the patient sufferer. He came at her summons, but only in time to see his sister die.

So far he had fulfilled her wishes, and he sincerely mourned her death, more sincerely than Mabel thought, for his mode of showing his grief was strange to her. He looked so surprised and awkward when she clung round him as her sole tie to earth, and seemed so anxious to dispel the grief which she, with the inexperience of youth and the tyranny of a first sorrow, would have cherished, that, trembling and abashed, she shrank from his rough, though kindly - intentioned consolation, and holding gaiety as little short of sacrilege to the departed, sought only the opportunity to weep alone.

The body was precious, though the soul had fled ; and she loved to sit beside that shrouded form, and to press her lips to the cold cheek. To her there seemed a hurry in its commitment to the tomb, as though grief was irksome, and only assumed as a fitting garment

for the time, to be thrown aside on the conclusion of the ceremony; and she was confirmed in this idea on learning that the cottage with all its comforts and embellishments was to be sold immediately. The shrubs her hands had planted, the flowers her care had tended, the drawings she had traced, the books which she had prized, (all sacred in her eyes, endeared by a thousand loving recollections,)—were these to be exposed to the gaze of the vulgar and the curious?—to be critically examined?—priced to the would-be-purchaser?—puffed by the auctioneer?—made a jest and a ridicule?—Were these to pass into the hands of uninterested strangers? Could her father have really loved the dead, and yet do this? She knew not that such was a common practice; she never thought of what the world would consider the reasonableness of parting with things for which he could find little or no use. Use!—was what the loved dead had touched, or formed, or tended, to be considered as a mere piece of merchandise?—a matter of profit or of loss? This convinced her of the difference of

their feelings towards the departed ;—the one had loved, the other had not ; so she judged, but she judged incorrectly.

Mr. Conyers had loved his sister — had proved it in many instances, and would have proved it in more had circumstances required it. He had the reality—the usefulness of love, if one may so term it, but little of its beauty, and none of its poetry ; such was scarcely to be expected from a fox-hunter of the last century rarely mixing in female society, however generous his nature, and kindly his disposition. If he had ever known anything of the poetry of feeling, it had faded into prose at the death of his wife.

He saw nothing but the usual course of proceeding in the intended sale ; but when he beheld his daughter's passionate burst of grief at its announcement, and comprehended her wishes, he yielded on the instant, rather than see her tears ; urging her to cheerfulness, and trying to explain the difference in their feelings by the circumstance of her being a simple girl, he an experienced man.

Mabel was permitted to select what she chose for transportation to the Grange, her own good sense and gratitude for the permission alone bounding her selection ; whilst the cottage itself was let at a low price to an old and esteemed friend of Miss Conyers, who would keep all things as they then were. Mabel's grateful heart again turned to her father with a child's affection ; and though the delicacy and sensitiveness of her love received innumerable shocks from his maladroit attempts .at consolation, those attempts arose so evidently from real kindness, that she tried to repay them by the cheerfulness he recommended, and began better to understand his character and prize his worth, though the awe and disappointment which he had inspired on their first meeting had not passed away.

The word "home," as applied to the Grange, had struck her painfully, recalling the happy home and the beloved guide now lost for ever. The Grange might be beautiful, its grounds extensive, its apartments lofty, but what were these things to her ? It was not her child-

hood's home,—it had none of the charms of early recollections—was linked with none of the young heart's gentle memories. Its greatest merit in her eyes, was its having been the birth-place of her aunt, and had she been going thither with that aunt, she would have been eager to see—resolved to admire it; but she was gone, and the Grange had lost its interest. The beauties her father had principally extolled awakened no admiration; she cared nothing for the best hunting or shooting covers; the most productive arable, or the most fertile pasture land. She had listened with attention, as she always did, but even the not very penetrating squire saw that her heart was not in the matter.

That part of the country in which the Grange was situated, was not remarkable for its general beauty, though some lovely spots in the valleys acquired additional charms from their contrast with the bare and barren hills. There was little level ground, the country emulating the ups and downs of life. It was

not till the chaise had gained the summit of another hill, and the little village of Ranford with its great house, the Grange, lay directly beneath, that Mr. Conyers again addressed his daughter.

“ There, Mabel,—there is the Grange, where those of our name have lived for more than four hundred years. I always feel happier for looking on its old walls. There !—now you have a full view of it through the trees: make haste, or the wood will hide it again.”

Mabel not only looked, but also admired, as was wished; she would have been deficient in taste if she had not. From that spot the Grange was seen to the greatest advantage. Its picturesque gable-ends, its tall twisted chimneys, its grey stone copings, its arched entrance, backed by its rich woods, looked imposing in the distance; whilst the ground, sloping down to a piece of water in the front, the fresh green dotted with sheep and cattle, gave a home-feeling to the scene. The observer doubted not of a welcome, till a near approach showed the slo-

venly style in which all was allowed to remain ; —no, not all,—the stable and the dog-kennel were as they should be.

“ I am glad you like it, Mabel. I began to doubt if you could like anything,” said her father, pleased with her admiration. “ And, see ! there is old Sarah Williams, dropping courtesy after courtesy ; and that mischievous young dog, Jack Philips, mocking her. They are all coming out to have a stare at you, men and women, dogs, cats, and children. They could not be more curious if they thought to see a dancing-bear. *I am quite overlooked.*”

Mr. Conyers was right ; every cottage in the village disgorged its living contents to see the chaise and the young miss, the former ranking little behind the latter as a wonder, no carriage having been seen at Ranford since Miss Conyers’s last visit to the Grange. To see the travelling-chaise in full career was therefore “ a marvel and a show ” to the simple villagers,—to see the squire in it, who was no patroniser of wheel-carriages, deeming them too luxurious for his sex, enhanced the value of the sight.

The young mother hurried out with one child in her arms and two or three clinging to her apron ; the old granny hobbled to the door with her crutch ; the sturdy urchins, male and female, rushed before her, bearing kittens, puppies, ragged dolls, or pop-guns, in their arms ; the dogs yelped and barked ; and the noise and confusion were amazing. The squire was delighted, nodding to one, laughing at another, shouting an inquiry after a third, taking note of the notice of all, as the chaise proceeded at a foot's pace through the village. Greater speed would have been dangerous, so rough was the road.

“ It will be better in summer : the springs rise in it at this season of the year,” remarked Mr. Conyers, appearing to think, for the first time in his life, some apology necessary for its wretched state.

Mabel, too, in the novelty of the scene, forgot her grief for a season, and returned the courtesies and the greetings of the villagers with a sincerity, if not a noise, equal to their own. She had not expected this cordial greet-

ing: she did not consider that curiosity might have increased the crowd of welcomers; enough that she was welcomed; whilst the regard evidenced towards her father, with his ready answers and kindly smile, something lessened her feeling of awe, and drew her closer to him.

CHAPTER II.

“THERE is the church,” remarked Mr. Conyers, in his character of cicerone, as they drove through the village. “Your poor mother rests there. That was a sad loss to me; though I sometimes doubt if she was happy, her smile was so sad, and she drooped from the day I brought her home. Yet she had all she wished for. You are like her, Mabel,—very like her,” laying his hand on her shoulder, and looking fondly into the fair face turned towards him with anxious interest. “It was a sad loss!—and poor Elizabeth gone too! But cheer up, Mabel,—you have a kind father left. Don’t sob so, poor child!” he continued, striving to check the emotion of his daughter, who, encouraged by his faltering tones as he spoke of the departed, had ventured to throw her arms about

his neck, and weep upon his bosom. This sudden burst was embarrassing to the squire, who could not bear to see a woman cry; and, ashamed of the moisture in his own eyes, he again made awkward attempts to soothe her.

“Cheer up, Mabel! We must all die; and they are gone to heaven. There,—hush now!—and I will see how gay I can make the Grange. There,—that is the cottage of Martha Wilford, your poor brother’s nurse,” trying to divert her grief by turning her attention to a small cottage standing some distance up a lane, and nearly hidden by trees.

The promised gaiety had been ineffectual, but at this the weeper raised her head, and looked in the direction pointed out. It was the first time her brother had been named between them; and Martha Wilford was an object of curiosity, from the terms in which she had been spoken of by her aunt. Eager looks were in vain; Martha Wilford came not to her door, which was closed; and if she looked at the youthful stranger, she was herself unseen. A turn in the road hid the cottage from her view,

and the chaise reached the entrance to the Grange. Half a dozen dirty merry-looking boys were disputing with the aged woman at the lodge for the honour of opening the gate, that, old and rickety, was threatened with destruction by the contest. Mabel smiled at the emulation and vigorous exertions of the boys in scraping their feet and pulling their hair ; but the smile passed away before she reached the house.

Though nothing was in absolute ruin, all, save the stable and kennel, was approaching to decay. It might be imagined the residence of a niggard or a prodigal, as the eye rested upon different objects. The road was muddy and uneven, the ruts (carts passed this way) unlevelled, and the edges uncut ; yet there was a large heap of fine gravel near, almost covered with weeds, which, with a little labour, would have made the road good, instead of being itself, as it now was, only another dissight. The rails fencing the lawn from what was termed the park, were rotten, chipped, broken down, or tied together with pack-thread ; whilst a pile

of timber, far more in sight than a pile of timber should be, sufficiently abundant to fence round a hundred such lawns, was decaying unemployed. The handsome front was still there, (stone is a sturdy bearer of neglect,) but the grass grew up by the hall-steps, and uncouth excrescences were tacked on to the ancient structure, with an ill taste in form and arrangement which checked admiration for the original building. If Mr. Conyers was not the creator of these excrescences, he was their apologist when any ventured to condemn them; for he could not bear that aught connected with the old mansion should be subjected to blame or ridicule.

“There had been large families,” he said, “and the old house could not contain the whole tribe of youngsters. Then the ancient hall, nearly occupying the space of the ground floor, might do to sit in on a summer’s day, but as well be in an ice-house in winter; and the door was always left open; and the dogs came in as they pleased, and carried off what they pleased; and as times changed, nurseries,

and china closets, and dressing-rooms, were wanted, and each built as he liked, instead of paying a man to say you could not do this, and you could not do that, and this should be higher and that should be lower, puzzling the country workmen, and talking of harmony and nonsense. There were good cellars and kitchens, and a room to receive friends in, and that was enough for him and his visitors."

Accustomed to the most exquisite order and neatness, these discrepancies offended the eye of Mabel, who turned to the lawn, for flowers were her passion. A ragged Portugal laurel, a stunted laurestinus, with the remains of a bordering of thrift, round weedy, shapeless beds, were the best specimens that met her view. To her all wore a look of desolation, and she again felt with a sinking heart that she was a stranger,—that this was not her home,—that there was little in common between her and the dwellers at her birth-place.

"Down, Fan ! Be quiet, Neptune ! That is enough, Carlo ! Be still, can't you, Dash !" shouted Mr. Conyers, dealing rebuffs and ca-

resses to the innumerable dogs of every breed, that rushed out yelping and barking at the approach of the chaise, and crowded round, fawning and leaping on him before his foot had touched the ground.

“Come, get out, child! Never mind the dogs; they won’t hurt. You can’t be my daughter if you could feel afraid of all the curs in the land;—you must have been changed at nurse,” he continued, seeing that Mabel shrank from the riotous crew, and drew back into the carriage as a large Newfoundland puppy made a wild spring towards her, never doubting that his caresses would be most thankfully received. Still Mabel hesitated, though unwilling to displease her father by delay.

“Halloo! halloo!” shouted the squire, flinging a stick to some distance. Away rushed the dogs as their master intended, save a sly-looking terrier, and a steady old Newfoundlander.

“Now, be quick, child, before the fearful creatures come back. But you must get over this: I hate a woman to be afraid of anything,

and you will soon be used to them. See, old Pompey wants to make friends with you at once, in a quiet, gentlemanly way. He is old now, poor fellow! but he was a famous retriever once, and his mother was a great favourite with Elizabeth. Pat him, Mabel: he could not bite now if he would."

Mabel did pat the old dog, that looked up in her face with gratitude. Her father, pleased with her compliance, would have won the like favour for his other noisy retainers; but, drawing her cloak closely round her, as though she found it cold, she passed into the hall with a hasty step before the would-be familiar Newfoundland puppy and his associates had returned; and the squire with a good-natured smile, mingled with something like contempt at her timidity, followed her example.

"You will have a young mistress instead of an old master for the future, Sarah. Mabel is a capital housewife, I hear."

The person addressed (a fine-looking woman of forty, in gayer apparel than was usual with housekeepers of those olden times,) looked by

no means pleased at the assertion ; and though she tried to mould looks and words into a proper welcome of her young mistress, neither she nor the old master failed to perceive that the exchange was disagreeable.

“ I dare say Mabel will be no severe mistress, and you must assist her inexperience,” remarked the squire kindly, to allay her discomposure. “ I hope you have a good dinner for us, and ready too, for I am half famished, and I know that your dinners are worth eating.”

“ Dinner is only waiting for you, sir,” replied Sarah a little less sullenly.

“ That is right : order it up directly ; no time for dress to-day.”

It was strange to the squire, who for so many years had seen no female gracing his table with her presence, to look at the fair young girl before him, and trace in her an almost twin-like resemblance to her mother, as he had first known her, and who had sat in that very chair, with something of the same sad and timid air so many years before. He

started as he first looked up and saw her before him. For a moment he forgot the past, thinking he looked on his young bride; then that past returned to his mind: he thought of that young wife on her death-bed—of the boy whom she had bade him guard—of her earnest look and her sad tones—of some wrong hinted at and forgiven:—he thought of these things, and his eyes were dimmed; but no sooner was he aware of the weakness than he strove to shake it off, assuming unwonted hilarity.

It was newer and sadder still to Mabel to sit in that strange, dark room, with the portraits of her ancestors looking down upon her, as she thought, with cold, unfriendly eyes, the one loved face which she had seen for years no longer before her, and its place supplied by that of an almost stranger. She, too, was indulging in melancholy reflections, the silent tears falling unhidden in her lap, when the scratching of an impatient setter on her arm, who had taken a particular fancy to a bone on her plate, roused her from her reverie in no pleasant

manner. She started from her seat with a faint scream, while the ready dog helped himself to the desired morsel.

“A clever fellow,” remarked Mr. Conyers. “Take your seat again, Mabel, and do try to conquer these silly fears. I make excuses now, as you have not been accustomed to dogs; but I cannot have such nonsense long. You shall have a whip, if you cannot keep them in order otherwise; but never fear a dog, and he will never hurt you. They are sagacious creatures, dogs;” and Mr. Conyers (mounted on one of his hobbies) lectured long on the qualities and exploits of his four-footed favourites to the silent Mabel, who retook her seat in fear and trembling, gladly availing herself of the advice of her father to retire early, who, on his part, felt depressed at her sadness.

Mabel wept herself to sleep, and slept till, starting up, awakened by the confused noise of the trampling of horses and the barking of many dogs, she gazed round in wonder on the oak wainscoted room, with its old grim portraits, and the darkly-curtained bed, all dimly

seen by the misty morning light. Was she dreaming still? She sprang to the window. Below was her father in his hunting dress assisting the groom in driving back the dogs, that desired to be his escort. The task was accomplished, and, putting spurs to his hack, for he was late, he galloped from her sight, without one look, one thought, as it seemed, on the lonely girl who was gazing so sadly upon him. It was still early, and Mabel wept herself to sleep again. The feeling of desolation grew the stronger; she felt that man's love was not as woman's,—that her father's grief was not as hers. She cherished the memory of the departed—he strove to forget it.

The day was twin to the preceding,—no sunshine to gladden, no break in the clouds to give hope. She went over the house and the near grounds with the housekeeper and gardener, and the hasty impression of the day before was confirmed. Though young and inexperienced, she could not fail to perceive that her father's affairs in every department were ill managed, his good nature inducing him to grant

every request that did not very materially interfere with his personal comfort. Every family in the village had a member quartered on him in doors or out ; and the number of loiterers in the kitchen and the stables, helping each other to do nothing, save devour the squire's substance, would have been absolutely horrifying to any zealous economist.

“One mouth cannot make much difference,” had been repeated and acted on till a skeleton regiment might have been embodied from the hangers-on at the Grange. Much was actually consumed, to the moral advantage of none,—for idleness teaches no good ; and, unhappily, still more was lost and wasted. There was everywhere, and in everything, the same contrast of want and abundance, spoiling, or ill applied, which Mabel had remarked the day before. Waste, extravagance, and indolence reigned in every department, and the Grange was as though under the absolute rule of the fairy Disorder.

There was little outward pomp or show ; to

one used to neatness, little comfort. But a princely fortune could not long have stood the under-current of waste, and it was reported that the squire's lands were not lightly mortgaged ; but this was the only point on which he was not perfectly frank and open. The domain once belonging to the Conyers had been sadly curtailed in its descent, whenever the expiration or cutting off of an entail allowed a sale. It was believed that the estate had not come unincumbered to the present possessor ; but, as the last in tail, it rested with him to clear by a farther sale any difficulties caused by himself or others, as also to devise the property as he should choose. A hint on the subject ever put him in a passion ; and he would not see that his kindness, which descended into weakness, and his disinclination to look into his own affairs must sooner or later cause the catastrophe he dreaded. With Burleigh he thought, " He who sells an acre of land loses an ounce of credit ;" and sell land he would not :—neither would he curtail his expenses.

“ He hated niggards ; his family had always been hospitable, and he would not be the first miser of the name.”

Distressed at the strong evidence of waste, Mabel spoke gently on the subject, her father having desired her to take the control of the household ; but the task of making that household clean, thrifty, and orderly would have exceeded the powers of Hercules. He might cleanse the Augean stable : he would not have reformed and purified the household at the Grange. Every hint even at a better arrangement was met by the reply, that “ it was according to master’s will or wishes,—it had been so for years ; they had been too long accustomed to old ways to learn new fashions.” Poor Mabel was indeed alone.

Her father was displeased with her tears and timidity, and the servants showed their vexation at the presence of a mistress, and worse, a reforming mistress,—one who loved neatness and frugality. The very dogs, taking her fear for ill will, showed their teeth at her approach, save old Pompey and the young Newfoundland,

who, much to her annoyance, continued his impertinent advances ; and even the old black cat swore at her for finding fault with her helping herself to some cold beef, without waiting for the ceremony of permission, or the etiquette of a knife and fork.

We are creatures of habit : and it is very disagreeable to be forced to be cleanly, when one has learnt to find pleasure in being dirty,—to be compelled to be in order, when one has acquired a taste for disorder. Besides, once begin reform, there is no knowing where it may end.

The idle hangers-on trembled for their idleness ; the engaged domestics for their perquisites, allowed or disallowed ; some feared that they should be obliged to work, others to remain sober. Their master could not with much show of justice reprove them on the latter point,—their young lady might. Minor differences were forgotten, and all united in a resolution to resist the new ruler in the home department, to preserve their rights untouched,—for as rights they considered them from habit,—and

their abuses unreformed. A determined but civil opposition to her wishes was unanimously resolved on. One rebel might have been dismissed; but their kind-hearted master would never part with all his old servants.

They were wise, as far as the wisdom of this world goes; and Mabel's sense of isolation increased as every moment waned. She longed for her loved cottage, with its happy look of home, and her own cheerful little apartment; she trod the dark passages, leading to chambers nearly as dark and narrow, with a sad and timid step; and as she sat in the large gloomy drawing-room, with its dark panels and its antique furniture, and heard the noise made by her heavy chair on the slippery oaken floor as she drew nearer to the wide chimney,—for, according to the country fashion of those times, there was only a small piece of carpet in the centre of the room,—she started as if she had committed a crime, and glanced with a frightened look at the grim starch portraits round, fancying, for the hundredth time, that they eyed her with no friendly mien. She tried to

brighten the fire on the wide open hearth ; but the irons were heavy for her small hands, and the huge green logs only smoked, or hissed across the dogs, whilst the room looked the home of discomfort. The heavy mahogany chairs, with their black seats and upright backs, stood close up against the wainscot in regular array, as if determined to be formal ; the walls felt damp, as well they might, the room being rarely used ; whilst the increasing mist added to the gloom.

To have ordered drier fuel would have ensured (as she knew from experience) an irruption of all the dogs, with such noisy, and perhaps purposely, ineffectual endeavours to eject them, should she make the request, as was a greater evil than a hissing sulky fire. She was a stranger in her father's halls !—the work lay untouched on her lap ; and tears flowed unheeded.

“ How are you, Mabel ? — quite recovered the journey ? ” asked her father kindly, entering the room with the whole tribe of dreaded dogs at his heels.

Hastily wiping her eyes, Mabel advanced to take her father's proffered hand, looking fearfully at the dogs as she did so.

"Back !" cried her father, smiling at her alarm ; dispersing his train with a brisk circling of his whip, and a crack that startled his daughter more than his dogs.

The squire could not forbear a laugh at her jump ; though, kissing her affectionately, he again asked kindly how she had rested.

" You are moped, poor child," seeing her tears ; " no wonder, all day alone. You shall ride with us to-morrow, and I will see what I can do to make you gay ; but you must get over your fear of dogs. What a fire you keep ! it would not singe Rover's tail. How is this ?"

" The servant says the wood is wet."

" He says the wood is wet, does he ? Then why does not he bring some that is dry ? he knows this is not proper for the drawing-room. My eye off for a moment, and the rascals do nothing right. Hollo there, John ! what do you mean by bringing such wood

as this into the drawing-room, and only Miss Conyers at home to manage it?"

"Please, sir, Miss——"

"Change it directly. I want no words; and mind it does not happen again. You must speak sharp to the rogues, Mabel, and give them a hollo now and then, or they will never mind you, instead of jumping as though you had heard a lion roar."

"Then I fear I have but little chance of being attended to," replied Mabel with a faint smile at his advice. "I did but hint a wish that the kitchen and the dairy should be kept a little more in order—the pans and dishes better washed; and I was met with assertions from all sides, that you preferred pans and dishes unwashed, and anywhere but in their places."

The squire's hearty laugh rang through the room.

"That is just like them! and accounts for the whole kitchen department being in rebellion. The cook and all her scullions (on my word, I think she has more than she needs)

began talking together as I passed through, telling me some rigmarole of your starving the dogs, not letting them lick the dishes; but I would not hear the nonsense. You must not hint and whisper, you must rate them soundly, or they will never attend. I am obliged to give them a blow-up myself sometimes, for they are idle rogues."

"If they require that, sir, I shall never be heeded."

"I don't think you will," replied the squire, looking at the gentle being before him, his features lighting up with a father's pride at her loveliness. "I doubt the wisest plan will be to let them go on in their own way for the present; they have had it so long, no wonder they don't like to lose it. I believe them to be honest rogues after all, and attached to the family. Sarah keeps them in tolerable order, and I should not like to appear near, so let them go on as usual; and only speak sharp on great occasions,—that is, if you *can* speak sharp. If they bring you wet wood again, or neglect any thing for your com-

fort, I will turn them off directly," he added in a loud voice, as the servant entered with dry logs. "And now I must get ready for dinner.—By the bye, I have brought you home a visitor, Mabel, to spend some days: you will be sure to like him—every one likes Durnsford."

And Mabel did like Durnsford, and applied to him by word or look in all her troubles, and smiled her brightest smile when he declared that he should demand her of her father.

And who was Richard Durnsford? and what was he like? Was he young, or old? tall, or short? rich, or poor? plain, or handsome? In good truth, there are some of these questions his friends could not, and some he would not answer. His friends said he was neither tall, nor short—neither positively handsome, nor absolutely plain, but with the most prepossessing and best wearing of countenances; but whether he was rich, or poor—young, or old, those friends would not take upon themselves to say; neither would he, when questioned on the subject. His answers

on both points were lively jests, or brilliant repartees. Mr. Conyers, and others of his standing, declared him to be little younger than themselves; but his looks belied the declaration, and he avowed his determination of being always young, of never becoming old, with such a fascinating smile at the folly of the assertion, as rendered it difficult to deny its truth, or its wisdom. Then riches, he declared, depended entirely on the mind; he was rich, and he only, who considered himself so: for his part, he was resolved to believe himself the greatest capitalist in England.

Relations he had few—at least, in those parts, or of whom he talked; but his friends were countless—nearly, if not quite, of equal number with his acquaintance. He had the penetration to discover the way all wished to walk, and the tact and good-nature never to seem to stand before them in that way. He could do all things for everybody;—prescribe for dame or dog; talk sense and politeness to the mother; sing and dance with the daughter; drink and discuss agriculture

with the father; hunt and shoot with the son. He was the friend of the family in families innumerable. But the most remarkable things about him were, that though all came to him for consolation and advice, none were jealous of his influence; and though willing to oblige all, no one despised him—no one spoke of him with contempt. His was genius—the highest genius for society.

He had no fixed home. How could he have, without unkindness to his numerous friends in every part of England? His home was everywhere, with all his friends; and never was he known to weary any with his presence, ever departing before the heart acknowledged, and long ere the lip said that his visit had been long. He was always pressed with sincerity to remain,—ever welcomed with pleasure, and ever parted from with regret; whilst his steady and taciturn groom, with his three fine horses, were quartered in some neighbouring village, if their master entertained the shadow of a doubt as to his host's hospitality.

He hated a frown, he said, as he hated a

bog : he could not endure a check in his career, and hitherto he had had the wisdom to avoid it. From Mr. Conyers he was certain of the warmest welcome; he knew this, and much of his time had been spent at the Grange. The bachelor life of the owner suited him—it was liberty-hall; but now it had a young mistress, he might find it different. He found no difference: within a few days, he was as great a favourite with the daughter as with the father, and she felt less restraint towards him than towards her parent. He was ever prompt to guess her wishes — more prompt to fulfil them. When her father proposed her riding, the second day after her arrival, and would have mounted her on a skittish horse, without any heed to her terror, or her assertion of never having mounted anything more spirited than an old stupid Shetland pony,—declaring that a daughter of his must know how to ride, and could have no fear,—he took her part so kindly, yet so judiciously, that the plan was laid aside till he had procured her a more fitting steed. In all her troubles, he was the same kind friend.

Before he took his final departure (at the end of three months), the greater part of which he had spent at the Grange, Mabel better understood her father's character, and no longer felt so timid and so desolate. She had just laid aside her mourning, in compliance with Mr. Conyers's wishes; and he had yielded to hers, that she should not be compelled into society till the county races, when he insisted that she should be introduced, young as she was—not eighteen. Till then, she would be little troubled with visitors; so bad were the roads, so thinly inhabited the country round. She had so far conquered her fear of the dogs, that she warmed herself at the fire, though to do so she was compelled to displace one or more of the sleeping animals: she no longer objected to some of the tribe forming her escort when she walked; nay, she permitted the attentions of the riotous Newfoundland, and coaxed old Pompey to be her constant companion.

The rebellion to her rule in kitchen and dairy was subdued, or, more correctly speak-

ing, had subsided into an armed neutrality, on the part of the domestics and their satellites. Too gentle and timid to wish to interfere after once stating what she had seen to her father, she acted on his desire to leave all as it had been before; so that her power was no further exerted than in approving of the dinner proposed by Sarah, and in occasionally sending broth and delicacies to the sick poor. Her orders were always attended to, her wishes generally respected, and her sweet temper would have won love, had not the former rebels feared, from her occasional advice to the villagers, that her desire for reform was not extinct; only slumbering for a time, ready to break forth again should they relax their vigilance.

They little guessed how Mabel shrank from reproving, only doing so as matter of duty. That she disapproved of much she saw, was certain; and that much which she did not see was still more reprehensible, was as certain: but, too timid for contention, she never rebuked but when the comfort of her father or of some invalid required it. Thoughtless, inju-

dicious kindness, and indolent extravagance, had long ruled in the house and village ; and the attendant evils were too great to admit of cure by a gentle hand. Though the servants were all respectful, knowing their misdeeds, they looked on her with dread ; and she felt, save in the instance of the old gardener, and Ned the groom, who had been there in her mother's time, that she was served from interest, not affection. This was not seen by her father, and she did not mention it.

The neglected garden and shrubbery began to look a little less neglected under her care and the gardener's labour, though the season was against her wishes, and the old man sometimes obstinate. Her father had promised her flowers in the spring, and had absolutely insisted on his orders to repair the fence being obeyed ; so that the Grange did look more like a comfortable home than it had done for years.

Hard drinking (one of the vices of the times, now happily amended, we will hope from higher motives than mere fashion,) did sometimes force

on Mabel's knowledge what greatly shocked her; but she had no wish to see her father's errors:—to turn him from them was not in her power. To her, in essentials, he was ever kind: she might have dressed in cloth of gold, had she so wished, and could have proved that it was no French fashion. She now rarely wept; and though her laugh was seldom heard, and her step had scarcely the buoyancy of youth, yet she glided about with such a gentle grace—her smile was so softly bright—there was such a calm and dove-like beauty in her eyes, with such a touch of feeling in all she did or said—and she was withal so lovely, that the squire looked upon her with a father's pride, and began to love her with a father's love, though his mode of showing this was not always that which Mabel would have preferred. We have said that he had affection, but none of its poetry:—Mabel, perhaps, had too much for her own happiness.

“Good bye, Miss Conyers; recollect you have promised to hold me in remembrance,” said Mr. Durnsford, raising to his lips the

hand she had frankly given,—a rarer courtesy than than in these degenerate days.

“Pooh! man: one would think you were her lover, with that formal gallantry;—I should not frown though you touched her lips: you are old enough to be her father,” said the blunt squire.

“No such thing!” replied his guest, still retaining, with a gentle and respectful violence, the hand that sought to be withdrawn, and taking no notice of the hint evidently unpleasant to Mabel; “no such thing, Philip Conyers! I am not old enough to be her father:—I am a young man now, and mean to be a young man all my life. Father, indeed!—why I have taken a romantic cottage at Newton Marsh, and mean to claim Miss Conyers for my bride before the end of the year!”

“Is that true, Mabel?” asked her father, highly diverted at the idea, and the avowed youth of his old friend.

“I am afraid I am too old for him, since he is so very young,” replied Mabel with a quiet archness rare in her.

“ Not a whit too old,” rejoined Mr. Durnsford. “ I want age and gravity to balance my youth and giddiness :—so you will be mine, lovely Mabel !”

“ I think not : Mabel Conyers will be Mabel Conyers some time longer,” she replied with a blush, — withdrawing her hand, and placing it within her father’s arm ; though why she did so, or why she spoke more gravely than before, she would have found some difficulty in explaining.

“ Hear ! hear ! hear !” shouted her father. “ We shall have a new tragedy, — ‘ Richard, or the Rejected Lover !’ ”

“ With an afterpiece, — ‘ The Rejected Lover the Accepted Husband !’ ” replied his guest, joining in the laugh.

“ There is no hope for you, Durnsford ; — Mabel Conyers will not have you.”

“ Mabel Conyers will have me.”

“ When ?”

“ When I ask her.”

“ Ay, that she will, I doubt not ; and you shall have my consent when you have won hers.”

“ Shall I ? Remember this ! ”

“ I will.”

“ Farewell, lovely Mabel !—you will be my bride in time.”

“ Make haste ; — time waits for none,” remarked the squire.

“ I shall make no unnecessary delay ; and what I say I will do, shall be done. Health to my future bride and father, till we meet again ! ”

“ Good fortune to my future son ! ”

CHAPTER III.

“ HALLOO ! halloo ! — there, Rover ! — after him, my man ! ” shouted Edward Elton to a grave old dog beside him, pointing to a rabbit running across the lawn.

Old Rover raised his head, pricked his ears, looked at the flying rabbit, then up in his young master’s face, and finally settled his head comfortably again between his paws. Not so young Rover : the unhappy kitten he had been baying at for the last ten minutes was relieved from his attentions, and away dashed the overgrown puppy across two nicely-raked flower-beds, and through the shrubs, after the terrified rabbit ; and away after him rushed the young man, who had been standing for some time idly gazing on the setting sun. Much scrambling and shouting followed, and then the

dog and his young master re-appeared, the latter out of breath, with glowing cheeks and disordered hair.

“ You lazy old hound !” exclaimed the young man to the ancient setter : “ will you let your master’s pinks be eaten up, and not stir a foot,—you who have eaten from his hands so long ? You are getting indolent and selfish. Is that the consequence of age ?”

“ Probably : age brings wisdom. Why toil for what is not worth the winning ? To whom is gratitude due in this world ? I have fed old Rover for *my* pleasure—not for his.”

Edward started at the voice : he had not expected an answer.

“ I did not see you, sir,” he said, respectfully, and in some slight confusion.

“ Then you expected old Rover to defend himself ? Truly, youth is wise !”

“ It is at least active;—and the lazy old hound deserved reproof for not defending your property.”

“ Despite the danger of incurring your contempt, I prefer the quietude of the old, to the

over-activity of the young. The rabbit might have eaten my pinks;—the puppy has trodden down my snowdrops and anemones. I could have borne the open enmity of foes; but the falseness of friends!—it was that which crushed my heart—which made me loathe my kind!”

The bitterness of the speaker's tone riveted the attention of the young man. Though accustomed to such occasional bursts, they were so clearly the irresistible outpouring of a tortured spirit, that they could never be heard unmoved.

“Look there!” resumed the elder Elton, after a pause, with his usual measured tone.

Edward did look, and saw the puppy, whose activity he had been lauding, coursing round and over the beds, puppy-like, with a flaunting piece of rag in his mouth, stolen from the cook, who stood at the other side of the lawn scolding and calling. Young Rover stopped to give the rag a shake and a tear; then, perceiving that he was observed, sprang into the middle of a bed, and out again, scattering the mould in every direction, and bounding towards his

master with such ludicrous antics, that, though much provoked at the mischief done, and the smile of his companion, Edward could for the moment only laugh at his gambols.

“I am happy to say, sir, that your favourite anemones have received but little damage,” observed Edward, rejoining his father after having quieted the puppy, and restored the flower-beds to their former order, without the slightest assistance from Mr. Elton, who had looked on in perfect silence and seeming unconcern, not even approaching to ascertain what evil had been done.

“As you are such an advocate for gratitude, am I to thank chance or young Rover for the very judicious manner in which he gambolled?”

“You are severe, sir,” replied the young man, evidently hurt at the tone of the remark. “A puppy will be a puppy;—warm young blood will sometimes race a little violently through the veins: you would not have it stagnate as in that old hound? Action!—give me action! a stirring life!—not an objectless existence, a dull monotonous being! I was not

formed to be a dial, stuck in the centre of a squared garden for the sun to shine and the wind to blow on. I would be ever doing."

Mr. Elton gazed keenly on the ardent youth, whilst his own look was troubled, and then resumed his usual composed and placid tone.

"There has been enough done for one day to satisfy even your activity. Suppose you and your spirited coadjutor re-enter the house; my flowers would repose in greater peace if they knew you safely housed."

The young man, though not without some show of impatience, followed his father and the old dog, who walked quietly beside his elder master into the sitting-room, whilst young Rover proceeded to the kitchen, doubtless to apologise to the cook for running off with a portion of her apron.

Mr. Elton took up a book; his son did the same, threw it down, and then watched the clouds from the casement.

"Ha! the wind is getting up, and the clouds driving furiously across the sky. We shall have a wild stirring night,—a morn of life. I

hate one of your dull, sombre, soulless days, when you may hear your own heart beat, and watch an hour for the moving of a leaf."

His father looked up at this burst with a sigh, and his tone was sad. "What! that calm and lovely sunset, which I admired but so lately, gone?"

"Quite gone, sir. We shall have wild weather."

"And you seem to rejoice. Have you any scheme in view it can advantage?"

"Not I, sir; I wish I had, having no taste, like old Rover, for an indolent and do-nothing life. It is too cold to fish—besides that is but dull work; shooting is over, and I am weary of hunting out every creak and cranny in the mountains, frightening the wild birds and the lizards. I have counted the trees on the hills, and the stones in the hollows, and noted every patch of heath and furze, till I am weary."

"A profitable employment!" remarked Mr. Elton drily.

"As profitable as dozing away life before

the fire ;" pointing to the old dog sleeping on the hearth.

" Poor old Rover seems in particular ill favour with you to-day ; yet methinks his employment is nearly as profitable as yours."

" It is not my fault, sir, that I am not more profitably employed."

" What would you do ?" inquired his father in a lower tone.

" What would I do !" repeated the young man, glowing with eagerness. " I would forth into the world to run the race with my fellow men, to seek their good, to win their love, to satisfy the spirit that burns within me,—perhaps to write my name on the roll of my country's glory."

" I knew it would come to this !" murmured his companion, as the young man paused for breath.

For some moments he yielded to the conviction of the certainty, then roused himself to oppose it.

" You judge unwisely : there are too many as it is to run the race of life ; you would be

trampled on and crushed. None but giants of wealth and rank succeed, whilst thousands perish unnoted and unknown. Glory ! the empty bubble on the stream of time ! it bursts, and leaves no trace. Seek the good of your fellow men ! do so, and they despise you ;—do not so, and they hate you. Win their love ! they know not the meaning of the word ; there is no such thing ; it is but a fancy of the poet's, the dream of the young, the mist of the early morning veiling the rugged features of reality, and dispelled long ere the noon of life. Satisfy the spirit that is within you ! you would but cast fresh fuel on the burning pile. Boy, you understand it not !—how should you ? What know you of the brooding storm of doubt, the tempest of the passions, the mutiny of mind, the vortex of despair ; the rebel thoughts that will not calm, but rage and riot till they win the mastery ; the memories that will not hush, although you say, ‘ Be still ! ’ but crowd upon you like relentless foes, mocking and gibing when you bid them go. And you think to still these by fruition ! Fruition ! it may

come to common minds, for they have common wishes ; they may have fruition—they may not even feel satiety. But there are spirits to whom fruition cannot come ! You do not know yourself : you pamper the spirit, and then think to chain and bind it with links which will not fit—with bands which will not hold. Wave after wave leaps madly on, and so has done for ages :—will the ocean cease to flow ? Cloud after cloud sweeps wildly through the sky, and so has done since time began, and yet the wind is raving now. Hear me, boy ! There is a spirit in you—the spirit of unrest :—check it, curb it ;—give it not way one single inch ;—teach it not to conquer by your yielding ;—force it to be still—compel it into peace ! Once let it forth, and no barrier shall control it. You know not what the contest with your fellow man would be : better seek friendship from the serpent of the waste—better contend with the ravening beasts of prey. Remain unknowing and unknown—seek content—banish these idle dreams.”

“ I cannot, sir, even if I would. It is not

the passing fancy of a moment ; it is the sateless desire of the heart : it is eating life away—will depart only with that life. This very desire for action causes what you name ; it is characterized by its own flame, my life's monotony its fuel, and burps more fiercely every day. I cannot chain, I cannot bound it ; and if I say ' Depart ! ' it lingers still. Let me go, sir."

" You will not heed the warnings of experience,—you mock at the advice of age. Boy, I repeat, you will repent it."

" I will bear the evils I would brave. Bid me forth with your blessing."

Mr. Elton shook his head in sadness as he looked on the animated pleader.

" Would you leave me, Edward, lonely, desolate, again to feel the heart a waste—this earth a desert ?"

" No, sir," replied the young man, springing to his side ; " I would have you go forth with me."

" Again encounter with my kind ?—again combat with the wily, or the ravening beasts of

prey?—again be torn, again glut them with my misery? Ask it not.”

“For my sake! Surely you judge harshly; or if not, we shall be together—we shall combat side by side,” pleaded the eager youth.

“I tell you it cannot be. I will forth but for one purpose. Go, if you will leave me:—I ask you not to stay.”

The animated glow passed from the young man’s cheek, and after a struggle his cherished hopes were abandoned. His tone was as touching as had been his appeal.

“No, sir; I have said I will not leave you.”

“Bless you, my boy! And you will still this spirit of unrest?—you will be contented in your peaceful home?”

“I will try;” but the lip quivered as it pronounced the words.

The father pressed his hand in silence, and the young man turned away.

“Read to me, Edward,” said his father later in the evening.

His son rose with an assumed alacrity at va-

riance with his late melancholy listlessness, and without a question took the first book which came to hand. It was the Iliad—the very last work to bring rest to his spirit of unrest—to reconcile him to the monotony of inaction. It is the very genius of action; and the more he became interested in the deeds of its heroes, the more galling did he feel his own compelled quietude. A burning spot came on his cheek, and his voice rose or fell; his tones were harmonious or bitter, as his thoughts turned from the poem to himself. His father read his mind.

“We have heard enough of Homer for to-night. Suppose you try these essays.”

Edward tried them without a comment; but his reading was now as monotonous and spiritless as his fate. The author could not fix his attention, and his thoughts wandered far away.

“That will do,” said Mr. Elton with a deep sigh, and the book was laid aside.

There was a long silence: the father looked on the son, but the son looked on nothing.

“Edward,” said Mr. Elton at length.

Edward started, and answered without looking on the speaker.

“What would you, sir?”

“I cannot bear to see you thus.”

“Bear with me for a while, sir. I will retire now, and hereafter try to be all you wish. It is something to give up the desire of a life, though that life has been but short.”

“I do not ask you to give it up.”

Edward looked eagerly into the pale, sad face of the speaker. The hair had been grey from his earliest memory, the frame slightly bent, the brow deeply lined, and the features strongly marked, as if characterized by some fearful shock; but their general expression was a commanding calmness, as if the mind had subdued itself. There were occasional bursts of passionate bitterness, though these were rare; but such a moving expression of mingled sadness and resolution he had never seen before.

“What mean you, my father?” he asked, taking his hand.

“This, Edward: that you shall hear the

story of my life—the history of my wrongs. If you will then go forth to those who made a desert of my Eden,—a crater of my heart, I will not stay you.”

“ I will go forth to avenge those wrongs.”

“ Peace ! be still ! Would you join with the tempter ? I have struggled,—I struggle yet with the fiend. Vengeance is not for man ! Would I could subdue hate and contempt ! but they pour their burning lava on my heart, drying up its gentle springs. Tempt me not again ; I would not doubt the Creator’s justice.”

The young man shrank back rebuked.

Mr. Elton leant with his head against the mantelpiece for a few moments, and then resumed—

“ I have long seen that this hour must come, though I have striven as the dying strive for life to put it off. It has come !—you can know rest no more ! The golden age of hope is past, the iron rule of experience must succeed, and peace has passed for ever. That young heart is boiling up with its hopes and desires : it will not be still again till those hopes have been

crushed, — till those desires have consumed themselves. Listen to me, not with the ear only, but with the heart ; let the mind, too, hear and weigh,—then shall you be the arbiter of your own fate. Perchance you may heed the warning of my tale ; or perchance it may be labour thrown away, and the wounds of bygone years be bared to your sight for nought. It matters not : the history shall be told,—you shall learn that I once felt as you now feel. Once felt, say I ? Have those feelings passed away as a driven cloud or a passing breath ? No, no ! though in my pride I boast at times, I have subdued myself. Look on the sky to-day,—it is calm and cloudless, and the gentle breeze is of a summer softness : to-morrow comes,—the tempest raves, the heavy clouds are driven through the air. I have seen your eye upon me, fixed in wonder at my unnatural calmness, as your quick spirit deemed it. It was unnatural ! either a frozen seeming, whilst passion raged beneath, or the fearful calm portending or succeeding to the storm,—the horrid lull, the chilling torpor of despair. The wildest winter

follows the hottest summer. Ever distrust those who show such calmness : they are not what they seem, or what they should be ; they are the scathed ruins of the war of passions, not to be garlanded with flowery wreaths, or they are cold-blooded deceivers. Trust not these,—nay, trust none. Ay, boy, trust none !—not even me, your father,—your sole tie on earth,—he who has nursed your childhood, and would fain guide your youth,—trust him not. Why should you, since he dare not trust himself ?”

“ Hush, sir, I entreat !—speak not such fearful words !” said his son soothingly, looking with anxious affection into the speaker’s haggard face. “ Say not so : you can never deceive, or I would still bless you if you could. Do not speak of the past,—or not now—some other time. Defer it till a calmer moment.”

“ Calmer moment ! There can be no calm in connexion with the past,—no peace till memory shall fail. What is the present of this world ?—what can the future be while the past is an eternal Etna, pouring out burning tor-

rents? And you would forth to win such a past! Look you to it, boy! When the present tempts to sin, think there must be a past,—an ever-living, an undying past, weaving in its colours with the present and the future. Think of me,—think if the past, when no crime wrought its darkness, could thus bow down, thus ever wring by its bare memory,—think what a past would be the work of your own guilt, not woven by the guilt of others! Defer the tale!—defer nothing—not the gathering of a flower, the uprooting of a weed. The one will fade ere you inhale its odours; the other, gain a giant strength, and germinate, and bring forth thousand-fold. Now,—now must the tale be told! I could not check the torrent even if I would. Remove one barrier of the mind, and who shall stay the cataract? The hopes and the fears, the deeds and the sufferings of bygone years, rush on my mind with a whelming force, and the words must forth, or the heart would burst. Now, heed me, boy.”

His son could do no other. The rushing force of his story must have compelled the at-

tention of the coldest and the dullest,—must have moved the most insensible. The eye could not withdraw its gaze, the ear could not cease to hear,—the listener almost feared to breathe, lest he should lose a word.

CHAPTER IV.

“ You see me now bent and worn ; the bright curls silvered ; the smooth brow deeply lined ; the flashing eye grown dim ; the smiling lip compressed, lest moans should force their way. Think you I was always thus ? It was the working of one day—the stamping of one shock ! Think of me once as you are now ;—with the glossy curls, and the smiling lip, and the gleaming eye, and the bounding step ; the heart that dreamt no guile—the spirit buoyant with its bright hopes, basking in a present to which futurity seemed dull. Such was I in youth ! rich, joyous, courted,—loved, I deemed in my simplicity, by all. What am I now ?—a wreck ! a desolate ruin ! None turn to me in friendly guise, none flatter, and none love. As I was, so are you in heart,

though not in circumstance. As I am, so may you be. Who made me what I am?—men! with whom you would hold communion—to whom you would forth with confidence and love;—woman! in whom you would trust—in whose flatteries you would sun yourself. Shelter the serpent in your bosom! cradle the tiger in your arms!—do this, but trust not man or woman.

“ I stood forward in the world an object of applause and regard. All would have envied, had they not loved me; so said a hundred tongues, and I believed. They sped the shaft—I sheathed it in my heart. They only spoke—but I gave credence to their words. I had known no suffering—at least none worthy of the name. The petty sorrows of my early years had passed away, leaving no painful memory behind: they had worn no trace on the young heart; they had come and departed as rain-drops flung from the eagle’s wing. My parents died when I was too young to feel their loss. My guardians had been honest, and riches, that I deemed unbounded, were

at my command. The home of my fathers, too, was mine—an unsullied name—spirits which never drooped—and a heart that, like the brilliant creepers of the Western World, flung its flowery wreaths on all around its path, decking the worthless and the rotten, as the precious and the sound, in splendours not their own. I was the favourite of fortune—he on whom Nature lavished all her bounty, the cynosure of every eye—the admired of all admirers, the loved of each. So said the crowd that pressed around me, with their bright eyes and brighter smiles, their soft and glowing words. So said all; or the whispered tone of dissent was too low to meet an unheeding ear. So said all, and I believed them. Why should I not? Could eyes and lips deceive? Was I not wise, discreet, and generous, as they said? And how could they fancy to deceive the wise—mislead the discreet—bring ruin on the generous? Oh no! they said the truth, and I believed the flattery of my own heart, more inebriating, it may be, than the flattery of others.

“ If wise, discreet, and generous—above all, wealthy, what wonder all should come for counsel or assistance? Since all were friends, what wonder if I granted all they asked? What is wisdom, if it guide not the less wise? What is wealth, if it bring not joy to those we value? I counselled, and I gave; and eyes flashed brighter, and lips lauded louder than before. If any murmured, they murmured not to me,—all left me looking satisfied. How could people talk of self as the universal guide of man? of woe as his universal doom? of wearing away existence? of being alive, and yet not living? of deceiving, or being deceived? I knew no woe! I was exempt from the universal doom—my life was life indeed! I lived every hour—every minute—neither deceiving, nor deceived. Who said these things? Sour fanatics, neglected poets, disappointed ambitionists, creating an atmosphere of gloom and heaviness, and then complaining that all was dark, and they could not see,—heavy, and they could not breathe! Grumblers at evils, instead of overcomers; passive victims of their

own moody fancies—workers out of their self-spoken dooms. Mine was the wiser and the happier creed.

“ I felt for all, but there was one friend to whom I was more closely bound. A harmony of tastes, a communion of thought, a general sympathy, seemed to link us in bonds that time would only draw the closer, and that no chance could burst. We were as one in heart—as one in mind, though I was gay and prosperous, and he was grave and poor. I loved him as myself—and he deceived me! Should I not say, trust none ?

“ I loved, and in the blindness of love saw—would see, no error in the idol whom I worshipped with the homage of a young warm heart, pouring out on her the force and beauty of a first passion. In my eyes, the world held not a jewel worthy of her wearing. I wooed—I won—though others sought her. I listened to her whispered words—I stood beside her at the altar—I plighted hand and faith—I claimed her as my own. With the pride of a world’s conqueror, I bore her to the beautiful

home of my forefathers, and that home was as an Eden !”

The speaker paused, then proceeded more rapidly, as if fearing to linger on his tale, lest his powers should prove unequal to the task.

“For a time my bliss was perfect—my bride all that my doting heart had dreamed. My friend approved my choice, and my wife approved my friend. Oh, happy man with such a wife and such a friend ! And I strove to heighten their regard — idiot, madman that I was, who would not see what others saw ! Your mother placed you in my arms—my friend became your sponsor, and I was more than blest ! I would have staked my life on that wife’s love—I would have perilled limb and fortune to have served that friend.

“My wealth was not as boundless as I thought. Knavish and inefficient agents—false friends, who would not—or unfortunate friends, who could not repay what I had lent, all tended to embarrass me, and an interview with a person residing in the North became

an act of necessity. The fond wife wept, and I kissed away her tears. I dwell not on details : enough, that a bank broke, one pretended friend for whom I had been bound became a bankrupt, another absconded with a large sum ; the interview was delayed by various circumstances, my absence lengthened to more than double its intended time, and I found my affairs less promising than I could have believed ; in fact, I was little better than a ruined man, unless those could repay to whom I had afforded such munificent aid. At length I prepared for my return, but with a troubled and foreboding mind, for my wife's letters had been shorter and less frequent than I had hoped, and in moments of despondency I had fancied them cold and constrained. The nearer I approached the home I had left so blest, the lighter became my heart ; every apprehension passed away, and there was no gloom to dull the anticipated joy.

“ Within a few miles of that home dwelt a gentleman whom I esteemed but lightly,

though the world spoke loudly in his praise. I had sold him land and lent him money, for my dislike was but a fancy. On him I was to call by appointment. I found him courteous and friendly, as I had ever found him, and ready to pay some of the money due, whilst he requested a few days' delay for the remainder, if I could grant it without inconvenience, showing cause sufficient to induce me to comply with the request. He thanked me warmly, urging me to stay for refreshments, which I declined, giving as a reason my impatience to return to my wife and child, more especially as I had heard there was an apprehension of riots in the neighbourhood. He no longer pressed my stay, but remarked with a smile, which did not please me, though I understood not why, that I need be under no alarm, as my wife had a friend who would be sure to provide for her safety. Impatient to reach home, I pushed my horse to his utmost speed, thinking a little tenderness in one of his fore feet arose from stiffness and would wear off; but his lameness increased, and I found he

had run a nail into his foot, which I could not extract. I was without attendant, such being my custom. I led the poor animal, though fretting at the delay, for the lonely cross-road I had taken left little hope of meeting with assistance. A boy crouching under a hedge was the only human being in sight. As I approached, he came forward and placed a letter in my hands.

“Rage and indignation were my feelings on reading its contents,—not against my wife, but against the author of the slander, who bade me be at such a spot in my own grounds, at such an hour, when I should see the false friend whom I believed was with a dying relative, meeting the wife of my love in secret, by appointment. I gave no credit to the tale—no, not for a moment, but swore justice on the vile slanderer. A paper which had fallen from within the one I had read lay at my feet: I picked it up, and these words were traced on the outside: ‘This will prove the truth of the writer’s information; and he who is wronged knows how to right himself.’ I opened it; and then, and not till then,

were my doubts awakened. It was my wife's writing: I could not be deceived in that, though I tried to disbelieve the fact. I closed my eyes—I would not look upon the words of shame; but the characters glared out before me! To believe was worse than madness—to disbelieve, than folly. The note was directed to my friend, who had taught me to believe he was with the dying far away. It contained these words:

“ ‘ I will be in the arbour walk to-morrow evening a little after seven. My husband will not return till the following day, and your presence in the neighbourhood is, I still hope, unsuspected. I entreat you to be cautious; the happiness of her who loves you depends on your prudence.’

“ There was no signature — there needed none. I stared wildly round for the messenger, but he was gone; nothing was to be seen but a horseman at full speed crossing a field in the direction towards my home. He was too distant for me to distinguish accurately: but hate proclaimed what sight left doubtful; that

horseman was my treacherous friend, speeding on, no doubt, in full security, as I had fixed the following day for my return, fearing that I might not arrange my business sooner, and willing to give my wife a pleasurable surprise.

“ When the first effects of the shock had passed, I hurried on towards the place of meeting, but could not reach it till after the appointed time. The false wife and the false friend were already there. I crept through the shrubs till I was near enough to hear words that fell on my heart like the searing iron on the open wound. My stealthy step had not disturbed them ; and there I crouched, glaring on the faithless pair, drinking in with the thirsting spirit of revenge each tone that proved my wrongs. He was before her, looking into those very eyes into which I had looked to read their tale of love, holding that very hand plighted to me, and me alone, in the sight of Heaven, and pleading earnestly, passionately, for some boon on which he declared his every hope of happiness depended. The tone would have told that love was his theme, had not his

last words come with torturing distinctness on my ear.

“ ‘ Grant me one more interview—to-night or to-morrow ; I ask but one to plead my cause. Will she whom I love refuse me this ? Why not fly with me at once, and thus break bonds hateful to both ! It must—it shall be so : I swear I will not leave this country without another meeting. No one but nurse knows of my being here, and I can enter unseen, knowing the house so well. You cannot, you will not refuse me ? ’ he pleaded still more passionately. I listened breathlessly for the reply. It came : the tone was low and tremulous ; but I heard every word. ‘ I will not refuse you, though dreading that some evil may ensue. Should my husband by chance return, or should others see you—’ ‘ Deny me not for such simple doubts and fears. My future happiness or misery is in your hands. Would you see me die before you, or, worse, pine day by day in hopeless wretchedness ? You cannot be so dull at an excuse if my friend should return before he named : say anything—his love is too

confiding to admit a doubt. I will be in your dressing-room by twelve, and in the mean time shall prepare all things for flight. I quit not the house alone.' 'I still fear,' murmured his companion; and then she spoke so low, I could only catch the unconnected words, 'Fiery spirit—will not quietly submit—death may ensue.' 'Fear nothing for me or others,' replied her paramour in the eager tones of love and hope. 'To-morrow we shall be beyond reach, and no further secrecy will be required. How shall I repay you?' 'Let me see you happy, and I ask no more; but be prudent, for my sake.' 'I will; and nurse can be relied on.' 'Fly, sir, fly! some one comes!' exclaimed the nurse, rushing from a sheltering thicket. My eye was on their movements: I sprang forward to slay them as they stood at the moment of their guilty plotting. They fled; but my arm appeared endowed with more than mortal power, and the avenger was behind them. Heedless in my fury, my foot caught in the tangled brushwood, and I fell. Before I had risen and recovered sense and thought, false friend and

wife were gone. I listened breathlessly : there were footsteps in an adjoining path. I staggered forward, for my foot was injured by my fall, a pistol in my willing hand.

“ ‘ Follow me ! there is yet time ! ’ exclaimed the gentleman with whom I had parted some few hours before.

“ ‘ Whither are they gone ? ’ I demanded. ‘ I seek vengeance ! ’

“ ‘ You must first seek safety,’ he replied, leading me deeper into the shrubbery as he spoke.

“ ‘ My wife ! ’ I exclaimed, trying to free myself from his hold.

“ ‘ —Is hastening towards the house, followed at a distance by a muffled figure, who affects concealment : you must seek safety by some other road,’ replied my companion. ‘ Some bond for a bankrupt has become due, and the bailiffs are even now in sight. I heard of your peril, and galloped on to overtake you, judging from our late conversation that present payment was beyond your power ; whilst all are not so willing to be bound for others as yourself.

Come with me; your servants do not seem aware of your return, and I will show you a safe asylum till you can make arrangements.'

" 'No, no!' I shouted; 'I will on, though thousands should oppose me. They shall not meet to-night! — they shall not escape my vengeance! I will upbraid them with their guilt, and destroy, or be destroyed!'

" 'Ha! has it already come to that? I knew not it had proceeded so far,' remarked my companion.

" 'So far! Then you suspected?' I questioned, fiercely.

" 'I have heard rumours, but refused belief, knowing that you doubted neither wife nor friend.'

" 'Then the whole country knows the tale: yet you would stay me. Back! and let me on!'

" I burst from his grasp; but my will was stronger than my power:—my injured foot failed to support me, and I should have fallen but for his arm. I had never liked the man; but in my hour of need he did me service: he

guessed my meaning from my incoherent ravings, and calmed me for the time, leaving me the hope of future vengeance. To proceed to the house was to ensure my detention, (having no present means to redeem the bond,) and leave the guilty time and freedom ; so, yielding to his arguments, I consented to accompany him, and remain concealed, at least till night. With his assistance I reached his horse, which was tied to a tree at a little distance. Meeting the nurse with my sleeping infant in her arms, I insisted it should accompany me :— never again should it rest near the false heart which had betrayed its father. Remonstrance was vain, and my frenzied wish was accomplished. My child could not have deceived me ; to all else, my love had turned to hate. Threats silenced the nurse's objections, and I bore my child before me on the horse, which my companion aided me to mount.

“ I know not by what lonely paths we reached the cottage that was to be my hiding-place :—my senses wandered, and days elapsed before I could even crawl to the window to breathe

the fresh pure air. The sudden shock had been too much—one hour had destroyed the happiness of a whole life! Hope and confidence were gone:—distrust and despair had become the habit of my mind, varied only by bursts of frenzied rage! I demanded madly, why I was spared?—why life had conquered in the struggle, when death had been a blessing? During my delirium, the treacherous wife and friend seemed ever before me! I see them now, as I saw them then: and the fiend rules in my heart when I think upon them, as they stood, in that calm summer evening, plotting my shame and agony!—I, who had loved and trusted them, and would have given life for either!”

Mr. Elton covered his face, whilst his son pressed his hand in his with earnest sympathy. It was some moments before the speaker resumed his tale.

“ I was spared for years of suffering — sufferings that, I fear me, have been borne with pride rather than submission. The titled and the wealthy, with all the luxuries of life around —its pleasures all before them, with skill and

gold at their command, become the prey of death; whilst, in a wretched hut, upon a hard uncurtained bed, with bare cold walls, and no attendant but a simple woman, I, a struck and blasted tree, for whom none cared, lived on! And why? It was His will — I know no more; for I had welcomed death—wished not for life. Will time reveal a reason?—or eternity alone proclaim the bond that linked me still to being?

“The mistress of the cottage, to whom I had once shown some kindness, nursed me with a poor but willing gratitude; and he who had led me thither assisted as he best could, without revealing my retreat. Before I could tread on the green turf, and gaze upon the clear blue sky, (both hateful for their bright and happy look,) the objects of my vengeance had departed!—gone!—none could tell me whither—but gone together, the morning after my return. So well had the guilty laid their schemes, that I could learn no traces of their flight, or I would have followed to taunt them with their guilt. The woman guessed the thoughts that

were crowding on my brain — evil thoughts, and placed you in my arms, whom she had tended as carefully as she had tended me. You smiled; your little fingers clung to mine; and my heart still owned a tie to earth.

“ Disgusted with my kind—shrinking from again encountering those who, basely flattering in the hour of wealth, as basely blamed when ruin came, I resolved to retire from the world, leaving unexplained the mystery that, in the eyes of the many, enveloped my fate. An enemy had obtained possession of the bond, urging the law to its utmost tyranny. There was enough to satisfy his claim, and I yielded without a struggle, rather than hold communion with my kind. But, though resolved to rear you in seclusion, some means were requisite. I would not mingle in the bustling scenes of life, for I hated man; and I could not stoop to be a beggar. I had lent money to one deemed frank and honourable, but held no legal acknowledgment; there needed none from one so highly principled, and the recent death of an uncle would enable him to repay me

without inconvenience. This, joined to the sum I had already collected, and what I should receive from him who had provided for my safety, would more than satisfy my humbled wishes. I thought I could trust the frank and generous hunter : and to him, with an injunction of secrecy, I revealed the place of my abode, hinting a probability of my leaving the country, and requesting the repayment of the loan. In due time came the answer — brief, cautious, cold : he would pay the debt when I should produce its legal acknowledgment. He knew I had it not ! In my wrath, I would have abandoned my concealment, braving detention and the sneers of the rabble rout, to show him to the world the villain that he was ; but he who had before preserved me again came forward, offering to advance the money. I accepted the offer, assigning over to him, in return, after the payment of my debts, all to which I was entitled ; my signature being witnessed by the woman of the cottage and some stranger brought for the purpose. To baffle all endeavours to trace me, the deed, at his

suggestion, was dated the day of my visit at his house. He placed the money in my hands, received my thanks, and took a friendly leave, promising his services at any other time, should I require them, though my manner was rough and ungracious, and I refused to tell him of my future plans. I should have felt more grateful; but gratitude comes not always at our bidding, and I liked him not. I doubted—hated all! The friend of my youth had entered my Eden—tempted to evil, and deceived me! The wife of my bosom had given the love plighted to me to another!—the frank and generous spirit I had trusted played the cheat!—those I had aided showed not common honesty!—and the herd, who had so lauded, sneered and mocked! My name was a by-word and a jest! How could I trust again?

“Carefully disguised, I left the cottage, yielding in anger to the entreaties of my hostess that I would depart sooner than I had intended, and leave the neighbourhood immediately. What evil she apprehended from my stay, I

could not guess; but she might be said to thrust us from her door, so eager was she for our going, and I marked that she watched us as though fearing our return. The way was lonely—the sum I carried considerable, and I had taken care to make my pistols fit for use,—I have remembered since, against the inclination of my hostess; yet I had paid her liberally, and she had been a kind and careful nurse. With a bundle at my back, and you in my arms and calmly sleeping, whilst I suffered tortures, (for this departure appeared the realising of a misery which had seemed before but as a dream,) I set out on my melancholy journey. It was evening—darkness coming on; and this, joined to my disguise and the change wrought by suffering, left no fear of recognition.

“ I had proceeded some distance without encountering a human being, and, lost in thought, paid little heed to the wildness of the way, (a dreary waste with scattered brakes,) when the hollow tramp of a coming horse speeding over the heathery sward recalled my attention

to the present. On came the horseman, heedless of the ruggedness of the track, either unconscious of the peril, or too intent on some purposed act to be turned aside by a dangerous road. Night had set in. Save the coming horseman and his steed, neither man nor beast were in sight, and there was no habitation within miles: we were man to man on that dreary waste; I ill armed, not in full health, and embarrassed by the guarding of a helpless child. I had lately, too, learnt lessons of mistrust, and there was that in the muffled stranger, as he rode directly towards me, the moon bursting from behind a cloud and gleaming full upon him, which was little calculated to inspire confidence. I had but just time to place you on the ground and prepare for defence, when the horseman came within pistol-shot. For an instant he seemed to waver; the next, something held in his extended hand glittered in the moonshine. There was a whizzing noise in the air beside me, preceded by a bright flash, and followed by a loud report. The horse had shied, and his shot was harmless:

—not so mine. Before he could reach me, a fearful imprecation proved my aim and suspicions of his personal enmity alike correct. The practised horse stood still,—the rider's head bowed to his neck—his hands clutched at the mane, then relaxed their grasp, and the body fell to the earth with a dull heavy sound. I raised the head, loosened the crape, and sought to give him air. He half rose—glared upon me with a look of baffled rage—uttered a deep groan, and sank into my arms—a corpse.

“ I was vexed that my aim had been so sure—I had but fired in self-defence—I felt no enmity towards the dead. What was the evil which he had sought to do me, compared with the wrong wrought on me by a friend? I had no hate to waste on petty injuries. Till I looked on you, my child, I was little thankful for my safety. The hollow tramp of a second horse in the same direction roused me to action. It was probable that the approaching horseman was a comrade of the fallen man's, and I had no wish for a second encounter. Taking you again in my arms, I sprang on

the robber's horse, which was quietly grazing near, and galloped towards a wood at some little distance through which lay a path to the river. The fine animal did his best to repair the evil which his master might have done me; the hollow tramp of the following horseman sounded fainter and more faint, and long before I reached the river, was entirely lost to my eager ear.

“Stepping into a small fishing-boat, whose mooring-place I had learnt in happier days, I rowed out into the broad clear stream that showed a tranquil face, flowing calmly on in its gentle might with scarce a murmur, and drifted down in the current with silent oars, keeping the shady side and avoiding the moonlight, till I had passed miles on my course. There was neither rock nor fall to stop my way, and I dreamt of no obstruction, till my little boat was suddenly upset by striking against a rope stretched across the river. A good swimmer from my youth, I succeeded in saving you and the money which was about my person; but the bundle and some of your wraps

were borne away by the current. You suffered nothing from the accident, and we reached this retreat without further peril. Of those who wronged me I have heard nothing—their names have never reached my ear, have never passed my lips; and I have sworn that they never shall, save to warn or advantage you, or should chance throw them in my way. Vengeance is no longer a sateless thirst—I have striven with the tempter, I seek to shed no blood; but were that false friend before me, I could not answer for my acts. You have often deemed me cold and insensible: you know not the fires that consume me, while the brow is calm. You see not that this very outward calmness is but the seeming lull of the mind's storm. Your young blood riots in your veins—you sigh for change—you would have all feel as yourself; you know not yet the tyranny of passion—you believe not in the perfidy of man. I would school you to a saner mood—would teach you to rely upon yourself, and scorn mankind; but my own sudden bursts ill second my desire. You only

bind me still to life—earth holds no other in whom my heart can feel an interest. Will you, whom I have cherished with a father's care, unclothe the scarce seared wounds of by-gone years, bringing fresh tortures to an un-balmed heart? Speak! you have heard my tale; will you, too, prove ungrateful, and betray?"

"Believe it not, my father," replied the agitated son, pressing his hand affectionately as he looked upon him with his glistening eyes. "Think not I can forget the fostering care of years."

"Then you stay with me, and lay my head in the quiet grave. You will not forth among the friends of earth. As I—so do you hate and scorn your kind."

"We will hope that all are not alike," replied the young man hesitatingly, evading an answer to his father's wild appeal.

"Hope it not! All are alike! the only safeguard is self-interest. Love will not bind! and gratitude does not exist! I have spoken—can you dream of faith, of honour, still? Then

have I told the history of my wrongs in vain—in vain renewed the pangs of years long past. You take no warning from my words—you feel not for a parent's injuries."

"You wrong me, sir," said his son warmly, again taking the hand which had flung his aside. "Most deeply do I feel your injuries; and you must see I do. I will consecrate to you the life you saved—I will wear my years away in inactivity, if you so wish; but do not ask that I should hate and scorn my kind."

"And why not, boy? Have I not cause? Have you not cause, if you feel my wrongs as you would have me think you do? Were those wrongs petty wrongs?"

"Not so indeed! But though some did evil, all are not guilty: one whom you liked not proved your friend; and one poor and destitute, unbound by kindred, watched and nursed you with untiring zeal."

"And, it may be, set the robber on my path, when she could win no further guerdon. And that sudden and providing friend, might he not, too, be working for his own good?"

replied his father fiercely. "And that false wife and falser friend, and the cautious debtor, have you no excuse for them?" he continued bitterly: "can you not pale their guilt till it appear the hue of innocence?"

"I wish to pale no guilt; but my mother—I would gladly, if I might, believe her other than you say. How could she have so changed in the short period of your absence? Forgive me, my dear father,—I would not pain you, but I have pined for a mother's love, a mother's fond caress, and envied those thus blessed. And when, in answer to my simple questions, you said I had no mother, I thought of her as an angel dwelling beyond the sky I looked upon; and I have seen her in my dreams, my guardian and my guide. I cannot bear to link her name with shame. May you not have been deceived?"

"Deceived, boy! Would you madden me by doubts of my own sanity? Did I not hear her fix the time of meeting, and connive to lull my doubts? Take you your father for an idiot or a liar?"

“Ask me not such cruel questions ! I do but wonder how, once loving you, she should have changed. I do but wish that you had spoken to her.—Do not look so sternly on me. I have often wondered at your seeming coldness—been vexed at your change of mood. Say you forgive me—I little guessed what wrongs had wrought these things. I will not seek communion with my kind, since you desire it not : to hate and scorn them all untried is beyond my power.”

“You would not use the power if you had it.”

His son made no reply, and there was silence for some minutes. The strong excitement awakened by the recital of his early sorrows passed gradually away, and Mr. Elton's features approached more nearly to their usual calm expression, though the occasional lightening of his eye proved his passion but in part subdued. He was the first to speak, after gazing keenly on his son.

“I blame you not, Edward,” he said kindly, seeing that his son was sad at his reproof. “In my younger days, with every other blessing, I

too sighed for a parent's love—a mother's neck whereon to weep—a mother's tones wherewith to soothe. I blame you not.—But words are vain : let us speak no more of the past—let us think only of the future. Plead not for your mother—my own heart has pleaded for her till I was bowed with shame at that heart's weakness. I heard with my own ears the words that made my paradise an arid waste. If the past cannot be forgotten, let it be unnamed : I doubt not your regard, and time has proved mine. I am no hard taskmaster, requiring compliance merely for my own will : I value not submissive acts while the heart cherishes rebellious thoughts. Let us speak as man to man, not as a father to a son. I ask nothing from your love : I would convince your reason. You offer to remain. Do you say this because my tale has worked as I would have it work ? Have you learnt to see man as he is, tyrannous in power—wily in his weakness ? A life of inactivity, as you have named it, say, would it bring peace, or weariness ?”

“ I will remain—I pray you to let that suffice.”

“ It does suffice,” replied the father as he turned away.

When he spoke again, his manner was as it had been for months, ever since the young man’s first expressed desire for activity,—a mingling of coldness, tenderness, and sarcasm.

“ You shall not abide with me: the body might be here—the spirit would be far away.”

“ You should hear no murmur, sir. You said you blamed me not ; and in time I may control my thoughts, though I cannot now.”

“ And never will, if you yield your wishes and your passions sway till they have grown to tyrants. You may check the stream, you cannot bound the sea. One wish fulfilled, another comes ; and the wild wearying chase is never done—the excited spirit knows no rest. Peace is but irksome quietude ; youth knows no happiness but in the inebriating whirl of action,—it will not see that the whirlpool overwhelms and wrecks. You must go

forth, boy, to learn wisdom for yourself—you will not learn its truths from others. You will not take your father for your tutor: experience will prove a surer and a sterner teacher. Do not deprecate! do not seek to change my will! I was weak enough to hope it might be otherwise: I now see my folly, and am resolved. I condemn you not, I would rebuke myself. If with the strength and experience of manhood, I cannot tame the fiery passions of my youth,—and that they are not tamed, my sudden bursts have proved,—how dare I to blame you? I would warn as one who has erred, and errs, rather than reprove as one who offendeth not. You scarcely admit it to yourself, you would not allow it to me, but still the thought is in your heart, that there was some defect in my judgment—some want of wisdom in my acts—or my hearth had not been desolate, my bosom wrung, and that you could win a happier fate. Deny it not—the thought is there! Marvel not that I have read it in your changing features. Can aught blind love? They err who say it can.

not see—it sees too clearly for its peace. You will go into the world full of bright hopes, and brighter fancies, and rich dreams of love to all mankind; you will return to seclusion a withered and a blighted thing, despoiled of all that gives to life its beauty and its laugh! The butterfly sports in the bright summer sun, flitting from flower to flower;—what so happy? Ere evening comes, it is the spoiler's prey—crushed—bruised, its beauty gone,—or tortured to delight some scientific Nero. And yet, I say, go forth, for it must be so! May you learn a gentler lesson, and find gentler teachers!”

“Send me not away in anger!”

“I send you not away in anger, but in pity.”

“Would that I could tempt you to go with me, then!”

“Seek it not!” interrupted his father, with something of his former wild excitement. “I will not again hold communion with my kind, unless you stand in peril: hate and scorn, passive in seclusion, would become active

in a crowd: I might seek to rend, as I was rent. No! leave me to brood in silence and in solitude."

"I have pined for action,—sighed for a stirring life—some object for my rising energies; and the passion grew the stronger from your opposition: but now that you would grant my wish, I shrink from its fulfilment. I would not leave you lone and desolate, who have watched over me so tenderly. Let me abide with you, and I will strive to lay this spirit of unrest."

"Do you shrink from trial, misdoubting your own powers? Have you learnt to prize a calm won without encountering the horrors of the previous storm?" demanded his father, gazing eagerly into his son's face as he laid his hand upon his arm.

"No, sir!" replied the son with an energy and flushing of the cheek that made the questioner draw back with a dulled look; "I shrink from no trial—I doubt not my power in any mortal struggle; or, if I perish, there would be one of little value gone, whose

life had been worthless, actionless. I have no sudden love for monotony, but I would not leave you to your gloom: to win you back to cheerfulness shall henceforward be my motive."

"It is ever thus with youth: daring, presumptuous, doubting neither others nor itself, it judges actions by their glare. The patient martyr, whose glories are not blazoned forth, is, in its view, as nought. Eager reformer, too, of others, you would check my gloom, but leave untouched your own impatience. Enough that I bid you go. Self-knowledge is not learnt in solitude: where none oppose, the will becomes a tyrant. You must learn from suffering a wiser judgment of your powers. Youth, presumption, and inexperience, fit you but ill to cope with man, much less with heaven. You will not find yourself the conqueror in every mortal struggle; you will learn that you cannot rule your destiny as you imagine: you are not alone, but a tiny link in the great chain of society—a paltry item in the plan of Providence. Why am I as I am?

Why are thousands as they are, if our will alone could rule our fate? Was I weak and indolent, when you are strong and active? You may launch the bark; but will it speed on its course in spite of wind and tide? Can man command the sky?—the sea? Or if he could, shall each distinct one of the pigmy millions rule without a thought of general good? If so, the earth would be a fiercer field of tumult and of wrong than the wise hold it now. You are a clear-seeing philanthropist, I doubt not; yet you might chance to tangle the web of fate inextricably.”

“I deserve your reproof, sir, and submit,” replied the young man more humbly, his cheek crimsoned at the sarcastic rebuke. “My words were rash—my acts might be the same; but if I only spoke of my own power in the sudden flush of pride—if I appeared to trust in my own arm alone, the boldness was but in my words: I dare not the Eye that sees! I defy not the Arm that guides!—I would but use the energies I have, to bear or to avert, as the Almighty wills. Though I would not

submit with sluggish indolence to obstacles that activity might overcome, I would act in submission to the Bestower of those energies; which I would not waste in idleness. I may not control by my mere will; but, by God's grace, I may turn events, all adverse though they seem, to work me good."

"Right, Edward, if your heart but felt its weakness as deeply as you would fain have me believe.—Nay, boy, start not at my words! That proud look ill suits your humble speech. A loyal and submissive subject in your words, there is rebellion in your heart: *I* see it, though you see it not; and more, the blame is mine. I have borne my fate in pride;—I have submitted, feeling the impotence of weakness;—I have bowed, and not always humbly, as before a tyrant,—not knelt as to a loving, though rebuking father. And when the maddening memories of the fearful past have rushed upon my mind, I have rebelled, asking with haughty mien,—‘Why am I thus tortured? am I more guilty than my fellows?’ We have much to learn—it is my impatience which has partly

made you what you are. Look that you,—a rush, bending even to the summer breeze,—presume not on your own power—and say not to yourself, when far away,—‘My father would have guided me—himself he could not guide.’ Take warning, and not licence, from that father: you have not been tried, as he was tried; bereft of all at a single stroke, when years of prosperous fortune had ill fitted him for the reverse. Be warned by the advice, and pity the adviser. Take heed that you come not back with a seared and worldly heart, a bitter and a gloomy spirit, without my suffering to explain—I will not say excuse them. Talk no more of remaining here;—it shall not be! I may perchance learn more submission in your absence, for it frets me when I see you chafing at seclusion. If I have spoken harshly, heed not the outbreaking of a tortured spirit, whose former agonies have been renewed by their recital. Return to me sobered and contented; bring not upon me fiercer suffering by your rashness. I would

that you should lay me in my grave.—Now tell me of your plans.”

“ I was to blame, my father, in this matter: I was too proud, too daring; but do not think I can forget your care and love. You are agitated; let us speak of my plans at some future time.”

“ No: arrange all now. I will retire for a few minutes to regain that calmness which I knew not could be thus disturbed;” and pressing his son’s hand affectionately, he quitted the apartment.

CHAPTER V.

IMPATIENT as the young man had been for months—nay years, to enter on the life of action now before him, he did not find his father's absence long, so absorbed was he in the history of his wrongs. Man though he was, he would have thrown his arms around him and wept for pity ; but there was that in Mr. Elton's demeanour, even whilst depicting his pangs, which had checked the impulse. With all his regard for his son, (and it was little short of dotage,) his heart, characterized by its sudden shock, made stern by its cruel wrongs, could not condescend to the tenderness of love ; it had all its power, but none of its beautiful weakness, as the stern and the cold might term those attaching nothings of affection which link hearts in bonds that time cannot

sever. Awe and respect, if they did not chill the love of his son, stayed its expression. It was a lovely flower checked by a nipping wind: the flower still lived, but it wanted warmth and shine to make it bloom in all its beauty—to give to its petals their colour and their fragrance. It was this which had caused him to sigh for a mother's fondness as more gentle, more endearing—the loveliness of love! It was this, too, though scarcely admitted, which made him, whilst indignant at his father's wrongs, unwilling to allow his mother's change, and he was still striving to reconcile contending feelings, when Mr. Elton re-entered the room, with a countenance paler and calmer than usual, and wearing a softer expression than his son had ever seen it wear before.

“Now, Edward, for your plans: if I cannot admire their wisdom, I will endeavour to make clear their folly without bitterness, of which I fear there has been too much of late. The truth is, I have long foreseen to-day, and fretted at a necessity which I could not avoid;

thus hastening what I might not prevent. Your means can be but scanty, foreseeing, as I do, that they will bring no return, and that you will require from me food and raiment hereafter. My name had become a by-word and a jest before I retired to this seclusion, as I learnt from the discourse of many who knew me not in my disguise, and had I the will, I have not the power to influence one to serve you. You must depend on Heaven, and on yourself. With health, strength, and a knight-errant's spirit, you must go forth to seek adventures, and win wealth, honours, and your lady love, as in the olden time. I know you expect all this,—now how do you set about it?" inquired Mr. Elton with a kindness in his raillery he seldom showed. "What! silent, Edward?" he continued after a pause: "are you frightened already? I thought you boasted months since of a well-ordered plan."

"I am not alarmed at danger; but now, when called on to declare my plan, I fear that it may not meet your approbation—you will

hardly think it wise—we see things so differently,” replied his hesitating son in some confusion.

“ In plain words, you dread my raillery,” said his father mischievously ; “ and this fear promises but little wisdom. Out with it ! I have engaged to be merciful, and you are generally unchanged by ridicule ; indeed, with a generous sympathy, you hug more closely those hopes and ideas jested on by others. Are you for a journey to the sun ?—of course you are no lunatic. Produce the chart, and we will study all the routes, and decide upon the best.”

“ Nay, sir, you promised to be merciful,” replied the young man, recovering from his embarrassment. “ You always had a cruel pleasure in demolishing my airy castles.”

“ Fortunate for you that they were airy, or you would have been long since crushed beneath their ruins ! If not to the sun, whither would you ?”

“ To London.”

“ To London ! Ay, Whittington went thi-

ther. To court, of course: you will be prime minister before a month. The office of court fool has been abolished, I believe?"

"I fear it has, sir, or with your recommendation I should hope to obtain it."

"Answered in a good spirit," replied his father, joining in his smile. "If that light heart could outlive the storms of life, sages might envy you. But you think I am paying little heed to my promise of mercy, so proceed with your aërial structure, and I will refrain from applying the battering-ram of ridicule till the last story shall be raised. How do you go to town?"

"On foot. I heed no fatigue, desire to see something of the country, and am not in a hurry to reach my destination, as Carswell will not return from Ireland this month."

"Carswell! So you go to him! And what may you purpose to achieve in London? I think he said his uncle was a merchant. You will keep the ledger well, having a peculiar talent for business of all sorts!"

"I do not intend to become a merchant.

Carswell's father is a solicitor, employs many clerks, and, through his son's interest, I hope to be received into his house, or enabled to procure some other situation."

"A lawyer's clerk! A life of action, truly! A glorious field of enterprise! Perfect happiness, to be chained to the desk all day, digesting digests! A far pleasanter life than bounding over the hills at your own will and pleasure! A right sober plan this for taming a wild spirit!"

"I have little choice, sir: I am too old for the navy, and have neither means nor interest for the army."

"True, boy! so I must be contented to see you chancellor, instead of admiral or general. Ha! I have touched you! you strike at no ignoble game."

"I hope to obtain an honourable independence and be of some advantage to my fellow men, and to effect what steady perseverance can effect," replied his son in some embarrassment.

"Only an honourable independence, the

fruit of steady perseverance ! Moderate ! But I will not catechise too closely. So you go to Carswell, trusting that he will advance your views ? You will be a rich man within the year, for you take all things on trust."

" You forget, sir, that I had a letter from him not three weeks since, inviting me to town, and offering his own and his father's services."

" No ; I have not forgotten that he wrote to request you to send him a setter, and to free himself from the obligation, in a gentlemanly way, said civil things, and made civil offers. In your simplicity, you think the letter an original ; it is but a copy : I have seen a thousand such."

" Both profess gratitude for the slight services I rendered them."

" I cry your pardon ! that places the matter beyond a doubt. A hot-headed boy takes offence at a circus ; and one, little less rash on most occasions, but better tempered then, turns the riot with a jest, and saves the quarreller

a drubbing: an equal degree of restlessness produces a friendship, (lasting, of course;) and, as much of course, the father and son will substantially prove the unbounded gratitude they profess. A marvellous virtue gratitude!—with an equally marvellous memory! The other youth, calling himself Robert Forman, whom you chose to defend against odds on the highway, and afterwards supplied with money, is a proof of this. The money, which he would take only as a loan, has been returned fourfold, has it not? No wonder you depend on the gratitude of Carswell and his father!”

“This is too severe, sir; you would have done as I did, had you seen a stripling attacked by two armed and mounted highwaymen.”

“No proof of wisdom, if I had,” remarked Mr. Elton sarcastically.

“As for the money,” continued his son, without heeding the observation, “I told him I did not want it, and bade him keep it. I

would stake my life on his honesty, and entrust greater sums to his charge, feeling certain of repayment if in his power."

"It is to be hoped you have a cat-like number of lives, Edward. Stake your life on the truth of a stranger picked up on the road, known for eight-and-forty hours; and who was shy of speaking of his family! You do indeed take all things upon trust: but follow my advice, for the future, and do not lend on the same doubtful security."

"And this is the indulgence that you promised to my plan, sir," remarked the young man warmly, annoyed by the sarcastic observations of his companion, though that sarcasm was uttered in a less bitter tone than ordinary. "You demolish my aërial castles, as you term them, without the slightest pity. I agree with the author who says, that those who condemn and destroy, should prove their skill by erecting a superior structure: it is barbarous to leave me thus without a sheltering roof."

"I would build you a substantial mansion;

but you disdain so common-place an abode, and call the style monotonous !”

“ I rather fear that you would build me a palace of ice, cold and benumbing.”

“ As the palace of truth would seem to your deluded mind. I would but fit you for the temperature of the world.”

“ I should be frozen to death, sir, before I had become acclimated ; I could not exist below zero. What other plan, sir, would you propose ?”

“ A shrewd question, and a little puzzling. I have no other plan to propose ; he who takes the journey should count the cost, since he must pay the penalties.”

“ Then you do not disapprove of my plan, notwithstanding all your raillery.”

“ I could not have framed a wiser to compel you to admit the truth of all my warnings. For gratitude——”

“ Nay, sir.”

“ Well, well, Edward, I own I have been hard upon you, and you have borne it with better temper than I expected ; so let the

matter pass : I shall make no further objection. Depart this day week ; write to me, —not all you feel—I cannot expect that, but write to me as one who will grieve, not triumph, should his warnings be fulfilled. And now, good night : a father's blessing rest upon you !”

CHAPTER VI.

It was a bright, happy-looking morning when Edward Elton, declining the attendance of young Rover, and shaking hands with the fat old cook, the corner of whose apron was held to her eyes, left the retired abode of his childhood, and passed out into the world to mingle in the busy scenes of life—to meet its trials, and to bear its pangs.

From the night when his son's departure had been resolved on, till that preceding its accomplishment, Mr. Elton had never willingly alluded to the subject; but on that night the parent and his child sat long in solemn but affectionate talk, and after its conclusion both remained in silence, hand clasped in hand, till the former, mastering his emotion, spoke of the folly of delaying

a farewell which must be said, and abruptly embracing his son, and uttering a hurried blessing with an unsteady voice, left the room, having before arranged that they should not meet again in the morning.

Mr. Elton had spoken that night as if the truth had come upon him, that rebellion had been raging in his heart whilst cold and unfelt precepts of submission had issued from his lips. His bursts of passion had shown little of Christian meekness—his dark opinion of mankind little of Christian charity or forgiveness. His sufferings had been great—his wrongs wrought by those whom he most prized:—love and friendship had proved delusions;—and what were life without those blessings, real or believed? Let him not be judged too harshly: the time may come when he may judge himself more hardly than his greatest foe. Let him who has borne such pangs, and borne them with cheerful submission, say; “I am better than thou.” Such would not say it, for such would know how hard the trial. His dark opinions of mankind were scarcely lighten-

ed; but on that night, if he spoke not with love of his fellow-men, he at least brought his scorn less frequently and offensively forward. Either the feeling had formerly been exaggerated in its expression to check his son's desire to mingle with the world; or, softened by that son's departure, he was inclined to speak more kindly of those beings with whom he was so soon to mix: ceasing to declaim against man, perhaps, with a vague fancy of thus propitiating his favour towards the inexperienced youth so shortly to learn his real worth; or, more probably, too much absorbed in the prospect of losing the idol of his heart,—the only sunshine of his life, to bestow abuse on others. His warnings against trusting to idle professions, or being led by specious words, were valuable and judicious, and more effective as being so slightly tinged with his olden bitterness. Alarmed at the perils which might assail his son if launched upon the stream of life with too great a reliance on his own powers of withstanding evil, and ruling events by his own will, the more so from feeling that such

had been his own thoughts in youth, he strove with all the eloquence of an anxious parent to point out the danger of the young heart's pride, and to enforce a real, humble dependence upon his Maker.

“Teach the heart to feel, my son, what the lips have, I fear, but idly spoken. Say not to yourself, ‘My father murmured—he rebelled, and yet he preached submission:’ the error of my ways should furnish warning, and not taunts. I will not plead to you my pangs: there is pride in my heart in my desolation, as in my splendour;—though I bent the head, the haughty heart has not been bowed. I have talked of Christian submission—I have only acted this world's fortitude. I humble myself before my child to save him from guilt and sorrow—I admit to him what, as yet, I have scarcely admitted to myself. Behold the triumphs of a father's love! the pride of man is bowed before it! Heed my words, and bring not on my head the sin and shame of having led you by example on to evil.”

His son was greatly moved; he passed from

his father's presence with a more humble mind ; the presumptuousness of youth was checked, and his prayers that night were the sincere outpouring of a rebuked and chastened spirit.

It was long ere the sleep he courted came ; and when it did come, it was dull, heavy, and unrefreshing. Either he had not dreamt, or the only portion of his dream that lingered on his memory was a dim vision of his father bending over him. Had he known how that father had knelt beside his bed that night with murmured prayers—his eyes fixed on his sleeping son—the tears rolling unheeded down his sunken cheeks ;—had he heard his but half-checked sobs, when, returned to his apartment, he listened to that son's preparations for departure, stealthy as they were ;—had he known as he crept on tip-toe to his parent's door, that that parent slumbered not, but stayed his grief lest the listener should catch its sound ;—had he guessed the might of that love whose outward marks were so sternly repressed :—the son had thrown him-

self on his father's neck, and they had not parted. But he knew nothing of all this—guessed not how much his absence had been deplored, and passed from his childhood's home, and his childhood's guardian, in the belief that after the first few days his absence would be little heeded. He doubted not his father's love, but he knew not its extent—how often he had been watched for when he thought his return but little wished.

The pang of leaving his home and his father for many months once conquered, he went on his way with a bold and buoyant spirit, blessed with a heart naturally kind and generous, a temper not easily provoked, uniting quickness and perseverance; and a mind humbled by the tutoring of the night before. In no hurry to reach London, he cared not diverging from the direct road when lured to do so by any interesting object. A ruin or a mountain, a river or a stately mansion, a wooded dell or a gentle stream, each won his admiration, and turned his steps from the appointed way. Of fatigue, save sufficient to ensure a good

night's rest, he as yet knew nothing; no remorse for the past, no cares for the future, disturbed or prevented his slumbers; petty troubles troubled him not, and he had a smile and a kind word for all he met. His portmanteau had been sent on to Wexton to wait his arrival, and the bundle slung at his back did not prevent his aiding the loaded wayfarer—the little child passed contentedly from its wearied mother's arms into his temporary protection; the aged grandmother thanked him for bearing her pitcher from the well; and his frank and kindly manner won him a welcome even from the churlish. His was one of those happy minds which find or make a perpetual sunshine around them. Wealth! rank! genius! what are they in comparison in the scale of blessings? Even health, if such a temper is not the perfection of health, the harmony of every organ, is not of equal price. The natural sunshine of the mind is the highest blessing—the greatest talent, for which man has to be thankful and to account.

Some days had passed, yet his heart was

as light, his step as bounding—his anticipations of success, and his hopes of hereafter inducing his father to quit his seclusion, as strong as ever. The little difficulties he had encountered and overcome had excited, not depressed him, and he was devising the best means of clearing some inhospitable fences, and approaching a noble-looking, though evidently uninhabited house, on which he had been gazing for some time from a lofty and partly wooded hill, when a voice beside him startled and made him turn.

“ Perhaps, sir, you would like to walk in the grounds, and see the old house ?” repeated a pleasing-looking young man above the common class.

“ Thank you, I should very much like to do so,” replied Edward Elton with the frank good-humour so irresistible. “ To whom does the place belong ?” he inquired as his companion, unlocking a gate, admitted him into the park.

“ To Mr. Garnier, sir ; and my father has the care of it.”

“ It is the most beautiful spot I ever saw,” remarked Edward Elton, after frequent pauses to look and to admire. “ I have been wandering round the outskirts for some time, thinking that if I had the privilege of the three wishes, the possession of that residence with a suitable fortune would be one. It is a scene of such rich and varied beauty ;—that full broad river flowing calmly on in its silent might ; those rocky cliffs, sublime in their naked grandeur, or softened by the brushwood crowning their summits or clinging to their sides ; that ancient wood with its deep shade ; the verdant lawn, and the stately mansion with its touching look, as if of a ripe old age :—yes, I should certainly live here. In spite of being untenanted, there is a happy look about the house and grounds ; as an autumn day when the storm has fallen, and the sun is going to burst out from behind a cloud.

“ It is very much admired by all the walking gentlemen who come to draw it,” remarked his guide, a little proud of the praise, and glancing at the stranger’s sketch-book as he spoke.

“But, for my part, I find it very lonely. It is a dull place, and I want to see the world; but my father and mother won’t hear of it.”

Edward smiled at his poetical burst having given rise to the idea of his being a wandering artist, such as he had sometimes encountered in his long walks round his secluded home, and then moralised that, even here, on this spot so lavishly adorned by Nature, where he had dreamed for an instant of fixing his abode, content was not an abiding guest. The young man pointed out in the grounds all he considered worthy of notice, and then offered to show the stranger the interior of the mansion; an offer thankfully accepted by Edward, whose interest was strongly excited by the ancient building and beautiful scenery, as well as by his young guide, whose longing for change and an active life had created a sort of sympathy between them.

“Always wanting the keys to show some one over the house and grounds, instead of minding your work! — be sure your idleness will come

to no good, James," replied a shrill female voice loud enough to reach Edward, who was waiting in the passage for his guide's return.

"Nonsense, Aunt Judith! you have so often told me I shall be hanged, that I believe you wish it may come to pass, and prove you a prophetess. Let me have the keys now: when I am as old as you, I dare say I shall be contented to sit in the chimney-corner, and never stir out."

Aunt Judith was beginning a grumbling reply, perhaps a refusal, when Edward stepped into the room with a gay—

"Good morrow, dame! I am so taken with the outside of this old house, that you must not refuse me a sight of its inside; and if there is work to be done, I will lend a helping hand. Shall I begin by moving back that table for you?" laying hold of one lately displaced to facilitate cleaning.

"Who are you?" cried the old woman, in a tone of mingled surprise and terror—(at least so Edward thought,)—turning towards him, and gazing on him with eyes whose dimmed sight

prevented her discerning more than the general outline of his figure. "Who are you? — and why do you come here?" she demanded more vehemently, impatient at the delay in answering occasioned by the young man's surprise.

"Edward Elton — a stranger — never here before, and on my way to London," he replied good-naturedly. "And now tell me why you asked so impatiently, and seemed so alarmed at my entrance?"

"Yes; I might have known that it was not — that it could not be."

"Who did you think it was? — and what could not be?" demanded Edward eagerly, his curiosity much excited.

"The thief who robbed the hen-roost the other night! — but I might have guessed he would not venture to come here," replied the woman promptly, but in a tone of such excessive ill-humour as left it doubtful whether she spoke the truth, or invented a falsehood to annoy him.

"I certainly did not rob your hen-house the other night, though half-tempted to do so just

now—the fresh eggs looked so inviting,” replied Edward gaily, though disappointed at her reply. “I must coax you to dress me a couple or so, whilst I look over the house.”

“Begone !” said the woman harshly. “This is no Public for wayfarers.”

“But you will serve me for love, instead of hire. Positively I depart not without staying my hunger,” he added, encouraged by her nephew’s signs: “nay, I have set my mind on your telling me some stories of old times. I like to hear of the past, and want to learn all about the former owners of this house.”

“And what should I know of the past, or the former owners? I have nothing to tell!” replied the woman sharply, with a sudden glancing round the room.

“Not tell of the past! Oh, fie, aunt, to say so, when you often talk of old times, and look so awful that I am quite frightened!”

“Be still, boy! — You will come to evil yourself; and then you too will have a past!”

The last words were spoken in a tone so strange and hollow, that her hearers were silent,

only exchanging looks of surprise; and, after a pause, she spoke again:

“Why do you bring strangers here, James, as idle as yourself? Go!”

“Not till I have seen the house and tasted your eggs,” replied Edward good-humouredly, resolved on carrying his point despite the woman’s churlishness.

“There, then, show him the house, and make haste,” throwing the keys towards her nephew.

“I knew you would relent:—and the eggs will be ready on my return?”

“If you will not go without. But mind, boy, you bring in no more strangers: no good will come of it.”

“I hope no harm will happen this once,” remarked Edward, amused at her fears: “I am neither thief nor highwayman!”

“Highwayman!—who talks to me of highwaymen?” she demanded wildly, drawing up her bent figure, and looking as keenly as she could on the speaker.

“You had better come and see the house at

once, sir, whilst the eggs are getting ready," interposed her nephew; and Edward, from delicacy towards the young man, complied with his wish, though interested by the woman's manner.

"Your aunt appears a singular person," he remarked to his young guide, who, after a moment's hesitation, answered frankly,

"That she is, sir; and no pleasant temper to deal with! She never likes strangers, or to be asked of the past, though sometimes she will tell old stories by the hour together. She is always odd; but I never saw her so odd as to-day."

"Has she ever been stopped by a highwayman?—she seemed so alarmed at the mention."

"Not that I know of, sir; but she can never bear to hear the word. She is some years older than my mother, though not so old as she looks, having nearly lost her life in a brain fever, and never quite recovered her eyesight. Some say that her husband, who died years ago, was as bad as need to be; but she never speaks of him, and we were living many

miles off then, in peace and plenty. My father was a thriving farmer, and I was to have been articled to an attorney,—but crops were bad, rent high, prices low, my father was bound for a friend who could not pay, all our goods were seized, and we were beggars! My father went to Mr. Garnier, whose tenant he had once been; and that gentleman offered him to take charge of this house and grounds, and see that the tenants did their best by the farms. So we all came here; and instead of being a clerk with Lawyer Sims, I am obliged to keep the accounts, and sometimes work in the farm.”

“—And show gentlemen over the grounds, in spite of your aunt.”

“Yes, sir; and I am glad to talk with any one, for it’s sadly dull seeing nobody but father and mother, and aunt, who is as cross-grained as may be. I wonder that you coaxed her out of the eggs: I never knew her so strange and yet so obliging before.”

“Suppose I try to make her give me a night’s lodging besides?”

“That you will never do, sir; I wish you

could;—but I will make you as comfortable as I can without her—though I can't promise much, for she keeps all the keys. If my father was at home, there would be no trouble in the matter."

"I will try my powers with your aunt. Does Mr. Garnier never reside here?" looking round admiringly on a beautifully-proportioned though unfurnished apartment, whose range of windows commanded a fine prospect of the extensive park and majestic river.

"I don't think he ever has, sir, since the first year he had it—before I was born."

"And how many years ago is that?"

"I am just seventeen, sir; but I believe it was some time before that."

"And what caused him to leave it and not return?"

"Some say it was haunted by the ghost of the unfortunate gentleman who owned the place before."

"Why haunted?—tell me: I have a great fancy for ghost-stories."

"I am afraid you will be disappointed, sir,

for I know little worth telling, only what some old people in the next village say ; and it was so many years ago, some tell one thing, and some another. I have always thought that Aunt Judith knew more than she chose to say, for sometimes she lets out things as though she had been here at the time ; but ask her a question, and she is crosser-grained than usual, pretending to know nothing."

" At least, tell me all you have heard."

" Readily, sir ; but it is a strange confused story at the best. They say that the gentleman who lived here before was a fine generous heart, kept open house, and never turned away even a dog from the door without something to eat. I don't know how he was ruined, but he was, and his beautiful wife too, who doted on him, and who, all the old people say, was an angel, if ever there was one upon earth. The gentleman went to a distant part, and no one ever saw him alive again. Most think that he made away with himself, because he was ruined. His beautiful lady left the country just after, and died of a broken heart. Mr. Garnier took

possession of the estate, and came down to live here ; but he heard strange noises and met the poor gentleman's ghost, so soon went away again for good and all. Some say Mr. Garnier did not come by it quite fairly, and once loved the beautiful lady ;—but he has been a kind friend to us, and I would not speak anything against him."

"What was the gentleman's name?"

"Beauchamp, sir ; all agree in that—almost the only thing in which they do agree."

"And Mr. Garnier has never been here since?"

"No, sir ; nor ever will, I think. He has had all the handsome furniture removed to his other house, where he lives in fine style ; but he never looks happy, to my fancy,—and his children all die off, one after the other."

"It is a sad pity that such a house as this should be left unoccupied ! Are there any more rooms?"

"Only one, sir, — Mr. Beauchamp's own room, where they say the ghost walked : and there is a picture there—the only one to be

seen, for Mr. Garnier had all the old family paintings put into a garret, and the door nailed up."

"Why so?—that seems strange!"

"I don't know why, sir; but I have heard that he did not like to see them."

"How beautiful!" was Edward Elton's sudden exclamation as his companion, throwing open the door of a small room, gave to his view the portrait of a female in early youth, the light shining on it with a splendour of effect that must have contented the artist, though he had been the most fastidious of his race. "What touching loveliness!—the beauty of the heart imprinting its magic power on the perfect features! One could love such a woman at once and for ever; she has a charm above mere beauty!"

A but half-suppressed laugh from his companion at this sudden burst of admiration recalled the speaker to a sense of the want of wisdom in his rhapsody; and he joined in the merriment at his own expense.

"I was sure you would admire it, sir; all

who see it do,—though they do not look and speak like you. Mr. Garnier ordered that it should be taken care of.”

“ Whose portrait is it ? ”

“ Mrs. Beauchamp’s — the lady who died of a broken heart.”

Young Elton was strangely annoyed at the information. The portrait looked so full of the spirit of life, that, at the first moment, it seemed scarcely possible to believe that that spirit had been destroyed, and that one whose beauty appeared something more than earthly should have already submitted to a mortal fate, before the colours portraying her loveliness (a loveliness that the heart would fain believe could never wane) had faded, or grown dim from age.—To die too of a broken heart! Surely it could not be! — who would inflict pain on her? He cherished a sort of poetical belief that she was still alive—that they should meet; and, with a folly which not even the poetry and romance of one-and-twenty could excuse, he expected to meet her as he saw her semblance before him, unchanged through the course of

seventeen years, and more besides, as his guide assured him. Nay, he had the simplicity to fancy that, by some chance, when they should meet, there would be some link of sympathy between them. Well might his father seek to sober him !

“ How do you know that she died of a broken heart ?” he asked abruptly.

“ I have heard my father say so ; but I did not go to the funeral—not being born,” replied his young guide gaily, amused at his eagerness.

Edward still continued to gaze on the picture, till compelled to descend to the hall, where his eggs were prepared, by the woman’s violent ringing of an old cracked dinner-bell, and the remonstrances of James, who knew his aunt’s temper would be soured by delay.

“ You can look at it again, sir, after your dinner,” was the most efficacious argument in inducing Edward’s compliance.

Whilst eating the eggs,—which, to do aunt Judith justice, she had dressed as might have pleased a *gourmet*, had such a being existed

in those hospitable days, when the quantity more than the quality of viands was considered,—Edward sought by thanks and gracious words to win his hostess to the furnishing of some further particulars respecting the family of Beauchamp; but his endeavours were in vain. Either she looked upon him with a sudden and startling gaze, inquiring why he desired to know, at the same time denying all knowledge; or she turned from him in sullen silence, which no questions, no thanks, would induce her to break. The graces of his manner, generally so irresistible from its warmth and frankness—the showing of a kindly heart, that as yet knew no guile and had nothing to conceal, was here thrown away; it neither won nor softened her; and when he expressed a wish to spend a night at the house, offering handsome payment, her ill-temper arose to little short of fury, till, to save her nephew from her wrath, and an act of disobedience,—for he admitted that his parents had left strict charge not to let any stranger sleep beneath the roof during their absence,—he gave up the

design, and promised to depart after taking another look at the portrait which had excited so deep an interest. To this also Aunt Judith most strongly and strangely objected, demanding sharply what the picture could be to him? and as she had possessed herself of the key of the room whilst he had been discussing the eggs, and would not yield it, save compelled by absolute force, which neither of the young men chose to employ, Edward found himself obliged either to give up the point entirely, or submit to a compromise. After some debate, during which the woman's words and manner confirmed her nephew's hint of derangement, she consented to his having one quarter of an hour's further look at the picture, on his positive promise that he would, at the expiration of that time, quit the house and premises without further parley. This was only accorded on Edward's peremptory declaration that he would not depart without another sight of the picture; and Aunt Judith took her station before the clock to minute his absence, and ring the dinner-bell the instant the time should

have expired,—and all without assigning any more plausible reason for her churlishness than the possibility of the stranger's proving a thief, a suspicion which neither of her hearers believed she really entertained.

“Very well, Judith,” said Edward Elton gaily, yet half petulantly; “depend upon it, I return in the night and carry you off for this uncivil behaviour.”

“I wish you would,” muttered her dutiful nephew; whilst the dame herself took no notice of the laughing speech.

“Could any man feel so oppressed, so crushed by ruin or by wrong, as to throw away his life whilst the love of such a woman was still his? That love should have been earthly good enough. None but a selfish coward would have left her thus to stand alone against misfortune!” exclaimed Edward Elton when again standing before the portrait.

“Blame not the dead! Speak not of that which you do not know! Judge not as God, while you but see as man!” said a low, and sweet, but solemn voice; so sweet — so solemn,

that it came upon the ear with spell-like power.

He started at the voice, turning quickly round, not aware till then that his guide had left him. Beside him were two ladies, one in black, standing a little in advance as though she had just moved towards him, but so fully cloaked and closely muffled, that to form an idea of face or figure was beyond the power of the keenest eye. Before he had recovered his surprise—could ask a question or make a defence, the lady, clasping her hands, uttered an indistinct murmur, and would have fallen to the ground, had not the young man sprung forward and caught her in his arms. Bearing her to the window, which he threw open, he was on the point of unclosing her hood to give her air, when her companion stayed his hand, saying as she did so,

“May I request you to withdraw? My friend is subject to these attacks, and, leading a secluded life, is always distressed at meeting strangers. Leave her to my care, and she will soon recover.”

Curiosity and humanity prompted him to press his services; but they were so peremptorily declined, with such evident impatience at his presence, that he was obliged to leave the room without a sight of the fainting stranger's face, whom, without sufficient reason, he identified with the speaker.

"Will you be kind enough to send the woman we saw below, with a glass of water?" requested the lady who had urged his departure.

He promised acquiescence; and before he had left the gallery into which the room opened, he clearly distinguished the door bolted behind him.

"Is there a spell in the house that affects all who enter?" thought Edward as he descended the stairs;—"all the females, at least, for stranger ones I never met. Or has the spell been cast on me, that I am suddenly become so unprepossessing and terrific?"

"I was just going to ring the bell," said Annt Judith as he entered her room. "Now begone!"

"All in good time: but first, there is a lady fainting in the picture-room, and you must take her up a glass of water directly."

"Not I," replied the woman sulkily; adding instantly, "And what could she faint for?"

"Because she could not help it, I conclude," replied the young man with a smile.

"People don't faint for nothing—and in that room too!" muttered the woman with a look of fear.

"What do you mean?—Why should she faint?—Or what is there particular in that room?"

The strong interest expressed by the questioner's manner recalled the woman to her former churlish answers.

"How should I know why she fainted, or what is in the room?"

"Who is the lady?"

"How can I tell? She came here in a chaise, and paid money to see the house; and you might have looked at her as much as I did."

“ I saw nothing of the face of the fainting lady ; and her companion would not let me lift her hood. There is something strange in this matter ; and it is odd, too, that you should let them go over the house, when you are so anxious to turn me out.”

“ There is nothing small enough up there for a woman to carry off.”

“ Thank you for your good opinion !—but I tell you what, Judith, you know more of this matter—ay, and of others too—than you choose to tell ; and that looks ill.”

“ I tell you I know nothing !” replied the woman with passionate vehemence. “ Get you gone ! it is past your time.”

“ What will you take to let me stay another hour ?”

“ You shan’t stay a minute !—you promised to go, and go you shall, if I call in the men and dogs to turn you out !” exclaimed the woman, excited to little short of frenzy by his opposition. “ Will you go, as you said you would ?” approaching the window looking out into the yard as she spoke.

“ I must keep my promise if you will not be bribed to indulgence. Only let me stay till you have returned from taking the glass of water to the lady, that I may hear how she is.”

“ No,—I will not take the water till you are gone ;” seating herself in her arm-chair with an air of dogged resolve that gave no hope of change.

“ If I must go, I must,—with few thanks for your hospitality, and many wishes for your better humour when next we meet.”

“ Which I hope will be never,” she muttered as he left the room.

She watched him and James, who had joined him at the door, out of the court, and then went for the glass of water.

In vain Edward Elton sought to satisfy his curiosity concerning the strangers. James could learn no more from the post-boy, than that they had arrived in a chaise at the nearest town, from which they had taken another to bring them to Beauchamp Park ; and that they paid handsomely, and asked no questions.

They had come whilst Edward was contemplating the picture ; and the shortest—not the one who had fainted—had offered so large a bribe, that Aunt Judith had given them instant permission to wander over house and grounds alone and at their pleasure. To her nephew's surprise, they instantly proceeded to the late Mr. Beauchamp's room, as though they had been there before ; and on remarking this to his aunt, she had appeared uneasy.

Further information being beyond his reach, Edward was fain to be contented with his ignorance, and after offering remuneration to James, who declined it a little indignantly, the young men parted with mutual good wishes, the former expressing regret that he could not assist his obliging guide in his desire for employment in some gayer spot.

It was Edward's intention to proceed to the town from whence the ladies had arrived, with some idea of obtaining a sight of the fainting stranger on her return ; but directions are seldom clearly given or implicitly followed, and Edward was surprised and annoyed when, at

the close of the day, he found himself on inquiry some seven miles from the place where he had intended to pass the night. Before he resumed his journey on the morrow, he decided that Aunt Judith's past would probably not bear the scrutiny of the present, and that, as her nephew had hinted, misfortunes had in some degree bewildered her ideas, as well as soured her temper. Of the strange ladies all he could determine was, that their conduct was extraordinary; and that by no means satisfied his curiosity, so strongly excited by the rebuke of his hasty judgment, and their evident desire of concealment. Were they old, or young? and what was their purpose in coming? He did not know, and he was more vexed at his ignorance than was wise or agreeable. But we can sympathise with his vexation, hating a mystery undeveloped, or a secret withheld, above most other things. It is so very annoying not to know everything; and so very inexcusable now-a-days, since the publication of the Penny Magazine.

CHAPTER VII.

It was a day in March,—a beautiful day—that is, for hunting. The sun was not so bright as to dispel the scent or the mist: the one lingered in the valleys,—the other hung upon the hills, like gauzy curtains half withdrawn. There was no blue in the heavens; and the faint breeze from the south fell on the brow as a soft and dreamy sigh.

A young man looked down from one of the hills into the vale below. In the distance was a long line of hunters, fading to the view as they turned the base of an opposite hill, their cheering hollos falling every moment fainter on the ear. Between them and the young man (the hollow fall of their horses' hoofs on the smooth, hard down, sounding like the rumbling of some subterranean stream,) were

seen a few scattered horsemen, headed by a fine-looking man on a large and powerful horse, needing neither whip nor spur to urge him in pursuit of some two or three couple of hounds, that ran the scent without check or stop, with a speed that proved them true to their instinct, and left little doubt of their ultimate success, though their victim was not as yet within their view. The young man looked eagerly down from the height, and as the bold hunter in the front, on his gallant bay, swept swiftly past, he bounded down the hill, joining in the chace with the eager impetuosity of an ardent spirit. His slight but well-formed figure seemed fitted for exertion; every limb was firmly set, every sinew strongly strung: inured to exercise, he was as embodied action. Never weary, scarcely slackening his pace, on he ran by the side of the foremost hunter, most of whose followers were lagging far behind, their horses breathed by a deep fallow field, that the young man had escaped by his descent from the hill, which placed him beyond it.

“On my word, you are a gallant runner, and deserve to be in at the death! Cut across that field,—you can burst through the hedge by the old oak there, and you will save a mile: I must go round,” shouted the hunter.

An animated look towards his adviser spoke the young man’s thanks as he availed himself of the direction. On swept the chase, and on followed the young man cheering the hounds; for no one else was in sight, the stragglers having given up the pursuit, whilst the bold hunter had not yet reappeared. A slight check gave the runner breathing-time, and a view-hollo caused him to turn to the right. There was the hunter waving his hand impatiently, and shouting loudly.

“There—by that brake—lay the hounds on the scent!”

The runner did as he was directed, with the promptness, if not the skill of a practised sportsman; and on again swept the hounds and the youth, as though neither could tire; and on, too, swept the hunter, parallel to, but separated from them by a bank and pales so

high, and a ditch so deep, as to daunt even that bold and fearless rider. A muttered oath at the unexpected nailing up of a gate, with other words of impatience, mingled with orders how to manage the hounds till he could ride round, showed the young man his dilemma.

“ Stop, sir ; it is hard if between us we cannot break down a ream of pales.”

In an instant he was at the top of the bank ; when, selecting a rail which bore the marks of age, he seized it with a sudden spring, hanging to it with all his weight till it broke down with a crash, whilst he leapt lightly aside to avoid its falling upon him. A few moments more, and the hunter, on his practised and powerful steed, was out in the open country again, pursuing the hounds, and followed, at scarce the distance of a stone’s throw, by the swift runner. Within ten minutes the fox was seized and torn—the hounds rejoicing in the victory, but certainly not more than the bold hunter, who had dismounted to secure the brush, which he presented to the young stranger, as he came up, with a warm eulogy on his activity, and

a declaration that he had well earned the trophy. The runner received the offered honour with a bow of acknowledgment, and then, breathless and panting, threw himself on the ground, with a passing thought of the real worthlessness of that for which he had so eagerly sought. The pursuit at an end—the desired object obtained—the satiety of possession succeeded. But he was too young and inexperienced, too ardent and active, for such a thought to linger long, and rising with recovered breath and strength, he looked ready for another chase, had such come in his way; but none such crossing his path, he prepared to regain the road from which he had been tempted.

“You must be tired,” said the hunter, addressing the young stranger with friendly warmth, for his eagerness in the chase and swiftness of foot had won his favour.

“A little blown, sir, but not easily tired: I am inured to exercise.”

“Right: I hate your lazy loons. You are swift of foot; even Staynought” (patting

his gallant bay) "could scarcely distance you : for my part, I prefer riding."

"So do I, sir, when I have the choice," replied the young man with a smile.

"We shall be good friends, I see. I feared at first you were one of the wandering gentlemen beggars, who tease one to subscribe to prints or poetry. Parcel of nonsense ! though I did give something to have Staynought's picture taken ; but then he deserves it. You are not one of that sort—such fellows know little of hunting."

"No, indeed, sir ; I have not the happiness to be a genius."

"Happiness ! I see no happiness in it. A genius, to my mind, is another name for a beggar—next of kin to a fool : I never saw a rich genius yet, or one who could hunt. Give me the sight, and the cry of the hounds on a good scenting morning, and all the pictures and the poetry may be buried in the Red Sea with Pharaoh's host. I never will have a genius about my premises : he is sure to be the most idle and worthless of the whole set,—

and I fear I have a pretty many knaves and idlers about me as it is; but then, my father had before me, and the rogues have a regard for the family.—Here am I talking instead of riding home, and all the time as hungry as a hound. Come and dine with me: I owe you a dinner, if only for breaking down the pales; and a good dinner I will ensure its being, with capital wine to wash it down. Come along! it is getting late. A fine laugh I shall have against Barrett and his set! I told them they were after a fresh fox; but they only laughed, and away they went. Rattler was brought up at the Grange, and I can always depend on him;” caressing a fine hound, that, as if conscious of the praise bestowing on him, fawned and jumped on his praiser. “Good dog.—Rattler! down! down!—Come along, young man; this is the way to the Grange, and dinner must have been ready this hour. I am sorry I have not another horse to offer you; and I am not much of a walker myself,” hesitating to remount, and looking embarrassed.

“ Pray mount, sir, without heeding me,—I am not tired : but, as a stranger, I may be intruding.”

“ Intruding ! pooh, nonsense ! Philip Conyers never says what he does not mean, and would share his last meal with a keen hunter like yourself : besides, remember the pales, and make no excuses.”

“ I will make no more, sir, but accept your hospitable offer as frankly as it was made.”

“ That is right—I am no niggard to grudge a dinner. I keep up the old-fashioned hospitality, as my fathers did before me : I hate your French wines, and your French ways. What have we to do with the French, but to drub them when they get insolent ? I am an Englishman ; and one English hunter is worth all the French counts that ever were, or ever will be. I don't like anything French ; but give my friends a good fat sirloin, and fine old Port and Madeira. Phil Conyers would never ask any one to dinner whom he did not wish to see, and never stint a friend to a bottle.”

“ I have no doubt of your kindness and hospitality, sir,” remarked his guest, repressing a smile at the squire’s harangue, who had grown warm in his abuse of the French, whose wines, cookery, and manners he most cordially detested, without having by any means a sufficient knowledge to fit him for the office of judge.

“ There is the Grange !” exclaimed the squire with honest pride, checking his horse as abruptly as his discourse (a dissertation on drawing covers), to point out the irregular mansion to his stranger guest. “ The Conyerses have held it these four hundred years, and more.”

The young man’s praise was sufficiently warm to content the squire, who again put his horse in motion, and would have recurred to the skill required in a huntsman, had not his guest inquired how many miles they were from the town of Wexton.

“ Ten, at least, as the crow flies ; more by the carriage-road.”

“ Indeed !—that is unlucky ! Do you think,

sir, I could hire a horse in the village? for, despite my boasting, I should not like to walk so many miles to-night."

"Were you going to Wexton, then, when you joined the chase? It has taken you many miles out of your way."

"I never considered that, and scarcely regret it after such a glorious run."

"You shall have no cause to regret it," replied the squire, delighted at the enthusiastic praise of the run, of which he considered himself the hero. "You shall sleep at the Grange to-night, and ride one of my horses to Wexton to-morrow."

"Thank you, sir; the offer is too delightful to be willingly declined;—but, unluckily, my portmanteau is at Wexton."

"Never heed that: I can supply you."

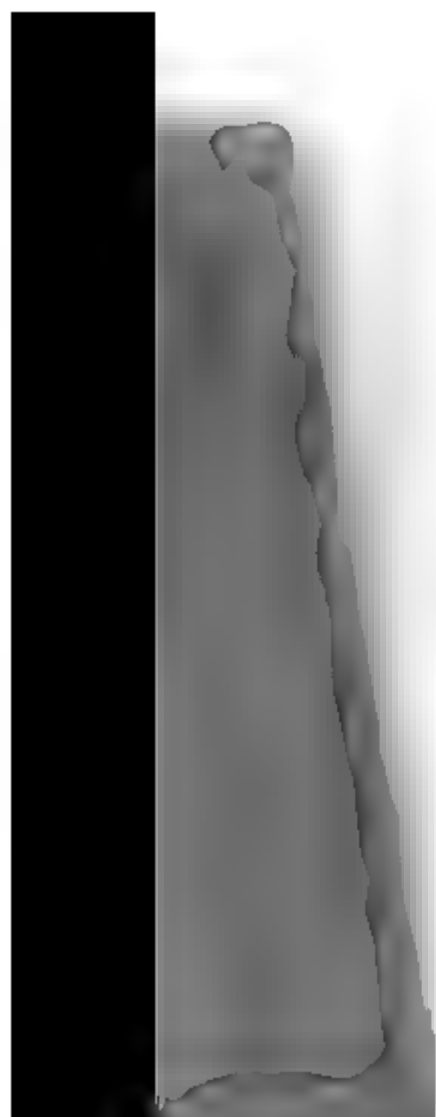
The whole tribe of dogs came out, as usual, to leap on the squire, and bark at the stranger. By dint of using whip and voice, the former reached the hall-door without falling over any; and the latter, meeting their attacks with boldness, and their fawning with encou-

agement, at once established himself as a friend in their estimation, — a circumstance which caused the squire to look with increasing favour on his guest.

“ I had better show you the way,” said Mr. Conyers, stamping with his thick boots up the heavy oak staircase, and throwing open the door of a large dark panelled room with a force that would have annihilated a nervous invalid.

“ Well, Mabel, how is your headache? Take to hunting, child, and you would not know the meaning of the words: — don’t be shy; but come out of that corner, and welcome the guest I have brought you home.”

The gentle Mabel, half blushing, half smiling at his address, for she had lost some of her timidity, came out from the recess of the window where she had been sitting at work, and curtsied to the stranger, who — shame to his manners! — forgot to bow in return; so surprised was he at the sight of the lovely girl before him (having taken for granted that his host had no daughter,) and so annoyed as he



...
...
...
...

...
...
...
...
...

...
...
...
...

...
...
...
...

...
...
...

at the tall and portly squire, nearly double his size.

Mr. Conyers laughed a long, loud laugh at the idea of the slight figure of his guest in his full-sized apparel; and even Mabel smiled at the thought, won to look at the stranger by the archness and sweetness of his tones, so different from the rough, unmodulated voices that usually met her ear.

“Then I do not know what is to be done,” said the squire, still laughing. “The best I can offer is, that James shall rub you down to the most advantage, and put fresh powder in your hair, whilst we will engage not to be critical:—but make haste, for dinner waits.”

“Oh, come; you do very well,” said the kind-hearted host, as the stranger re-entered the drawing-room but a few moments after himself.

“Thank you for the verdict in my favour,” replied the young man with his wonted and winning smile.

“I could not have said otherwise,” remarked the squire bluntly, really gazing with admira-

tion on the graceful figure, bright hazel eye, dark brown curling hair, and animated features of his guest.—“By the way, Mabel has reminded me of a sad omission: I never introduced you, seeming to take to you as if we had met before. But it is rather awkward not to be able to tell your name.”

“Edward Elton, sir.”

“And this is Mabel Conyers — my only daughter—the most timid of the timid. I shall marvel if she look at you enough to know if you are old or young—simpleton as she is!”

“You told me, the other day, that I was growing quite bold,” said his blushing child.

“Did I? — then I fear I said what was not quite the truth; and it is not often Philip Conyers can be accused of that.—But there is dinner; so march you down, Mabel, and I will put off chiding till another time.”

And down marched Mabel, the gentlemen following,—handing the ladies not being the fashion of those times in a retired country neighbourhood. The dinner (delayed for the squire) was concluded, having been done ample

justice to by the hunters; and still Mabel sat at the head of the table, doing its honours, though the conversation turned much on hunting, and she, as a gentle, generous woman, bestowed her sympathy upon the hunted, notwithstanding her father's remembrance that she had but lately lost some favourite chicken through Reynard's voracity, and that he had seen even her cheek flush and her eye kindle when the train of hounds and hunters swept on before her.

"All looked so eager and so happy, I forgot for the moment what the poor fox must suffer."

"Poor fox! — why, my little Mabel, you are too kind-hearted by half! — who would think of pitying a fox? If we did not hunt him, he would die in tortures in a trap, or pine away in old age. Besides, he likes it. I am sure he does!" he reiterated more loudly, as he marked the half smile on the lips of his guest and daughter.

"I never heard one say he did not," remarked Edward gaily, turning the conversation, which he fancied might weary his fair

hostess, who still lingered on, unconscious of a longer stay than usual, so well had the young stranger's animated remarks beguiled the time. But clocks were not then stayed from striking, lest the flight of time thus frequently brought before the mind should dull the thoughtless; and Mabel started when she found, from the warning tone of the old horologe, how long she had lingered in the dining-room.

"Fill your glass!" said the squire to his guest, pressing more wine upon him with the hospitality of those olden times.

"Excuse me, sir," said the young man with courteous firmness. "I have mixed but little with the world, and have neither the will nor the power to drink deep."

"You shall have your way. If my friends like to be carried to bed, instead of walking, I am not the man to baulk them; but I am no drinker when by myself. Suppose we go to the stable, then: I want to see how Staynought is after his chase, and if the hounds have had their dinner, and been sent to Barrett's, as I ordered. After that, Mabel shall give us tea."

Mabel did give them tea, and presided at the supper-table: and so frank and animated was the stranger's manner, yet withal so attentive and respectful to father and daughter, that his being unknown till that evening was forgotten. The very dogs fawned upon him as on an old acquaintance. The squire declared him to be a fine young fellow; and the timid Mabel would have recognised him had she not seen him again for months.

And what thought Edward Elton of his new acquaintance? We have seen that he was inclined to look on all things through a rose-coloured medium:—no wonder then that the warmth of the squire had won his heart; whilst the gentle Mabel, with her soft and touching loveliness, seemed to him as one of the fairy forms of which he had occasionally dreamt when resting on the greensward in some sheltered glade,—a brighter being than had ever yet crossed his path.

Female forms flitted before him in his slumbers. Aunt Judith came, with her harsh tones and her keen look, waving her arm towards

him with a Fury's wrath ; but one with a gliding, graceful motion came between, and the arm dropped weak and harmless ! The figure was closely muffled, as hers who had fainted : he knelt before it, praying to see her face ! The hood was raised, and disclosed the dazzling beauty of the portrait at Beauchamp Park, and he thought the eyes were turned on him in love. Even while he looked, her more than earthly beauty faded to the hues of death—the cloak became a shroud—and the dweller of the dark grave stood before him ! She passed from his sight as a wreath of mist, and Mabel stood in her place, with a gentle and confiding look, and a quiet, dove-like beauty, preferable, in his eyes, to the brightness of the former vision ! He held her hand in his—he whispered low soft words, and listened for her answer ;—before it came, his father rushed between and parted them ! Then succeeded a strange confusion ; many figures passed—some looking on him kindly, some in wrath ;—but he could distinguish no features, till Robert Forman, the young man whom he had defended, and the

highwayman from whom he had defended him, stood before him.

So Slumber wove her mingled web, till, roused by inharmonious voices beneath his window, he started up in his bed—gazed around in wonder—rubbed his eyes, to be sure that he no longer slept—and, after some moments of consideration, comprehended where he was, and how he had come thither !

CHAPTER VIII.

WHILST dressing, the dream of the night before recurred to his mind ; but, not able to unravel its tangled web, he resolved to dismiss it from his mind, and descended to the breakfast-room, the dining apartment of the preceding day. The fatigue and excitement of the chase had produced a slight degree of fever, and sleep had brought before him, as in a mental phantasmagoria, the scenes and the persons he had encountered during his short life ; but the machinery being out of order, there had been a sad want of harmony in distances, and lights, and shadows,—a crowding and mingling of all together, creating an inextricable confusion. That Aunt Judith, and the fainting lady, and the portrait, should have been prominent figures in the visioned confusion, was not strange, for there was mys-

tery attaching to each ; but why the gentle and single-minded Mabel should have formed part and parcel of the vision, or appeared in connexion with those singular personages, was not so easily to be accounted for, till, on his entering the breakfast-room, where she was ministering at the tea-table, he was struck with a real or fancied likeness to the admired portrait. So slight, however, was the resemblance (being only an occasional look, not a general similarity) that he sometimes doubted its reality, holding it but a fancy engendered by his dream, and not worthy of further thought. The portrait was beautiful and brilliant, with something of a lofty air ; Mabel, soft and lovely,—looking up, when she ventured to look, with a touching sweetness that asked for pity, and won regard.

“ Plague take that colt !” exclaimed the squire, starting up from the breakfast-table towards the conclusion of the repast, and approaching the window. “ He will never be properly broken, fit for hunting, he is so hot and restive.”

“ It is a fine animal !” remarked Edward, having followed his host.

“ Yes. I gave fifty guineas for him a year ago ; but Dawkins cannot break him, though famous for taming the wildest. I believe I must let him have him to send down into the West to his brother ; for his name is up here, and no one will mount him. Thirty guineas is little ; but I could not recommend him. No one but Dawkins dares ride him ; and he has been thrown twice, and cannot manage him.”

“ I do not think his present rider goes the right way to work,” observed his guest.

“ Indeed ! Dawkins is noted as the best breaker-in for miles round,” remarked the squire rather peevishly. “ Perhaps you have horses of your own, and superior jockeys ?”

“ I have no horse, sir. I am sorry to say, a gallant steed is still to me an object of desire, instead of possession.”

“ Poor fellow !” said Mr. Conyers compassionately, forgetting to feel offended at the presumption of one who had no stud giving

an opinion, in his pity at his being horseless ; the which, as an inveterate hunter, unwilling, and, from disuse, unable to walk, he considered one of the mighty misfortunes of this life.

“ He will be thrown ! ” exclaimed Mabel in alarm, as the horse reared, kicked, and curveted in no gentle manner.

“ Be under no alarm, Miss Conyers ! I am much mistaken if that rider will provoke his horse to more than he can well endure.”

The squire turned a quick and not well-pleased glance at the speaker, remarking pettishly, “ Suppose you try him yourself, young man.”

“ Readily, sir ! with your permission,” replied his guest, meeting his gaze with a steady look, his cheek flushing at the tone still more than the words.

“ Do not try ! Pray do not try ! ” pleaded Mabel earnestly, forgetting her shyness in her fear of an accident.

“ I thank you for your kindness, Miss Conyers,” he replied gently ; then added a little proudly, for his young blood was up,

“ I must prove to your father that I am not the boaster he believes me.”

“ Surely you will not let him go !” exclaimed Mabel, clinging to her father’s arm. “ Think if he should be hurt !”

“ Pshaw ! Mabel, you are always frightened about everything : I dare say he will think better of it.”

Edward Elton had lingered a moment to catch those gentle tones, but he lingered not with the hope of being recalled, and though his eye flashed at the squire’s answer, it made no change in his resolution.

Choosing a whip as he passed through the hall, he stepped out upon the lawn and walked towards the still restive animal.

“ Stop, Mr. Elton,” exclaimed the squire, throwing up the window, and half shaking off his daughter, who was still clinging to his arm.

Edward approached, but with a rather stately air, uncertain if the Mr. Elton so formally pronounced was meant in mockery or politeness ; for, brief as had been their acquaintance,

the squire, considering his age a warrant, had before waved punctilio in his address.

“What is your wish, sir?” inquired Edward proudly.

Mr. Conyers paused for a moment.

“Wish?—oh, to have the past five minutes forgotten,” he answered frankly, having recovered his good-humour, and not liking to expose the young man to danger. “It would be a strange piece of hospitality to condemn my guest to ride a restive horse, with plenty of others in the stable.”

“In plain words, sir, you had rather that I would not mount your colt.”

“In plain words, yes.”

“One more question, if you please, sir; and pardon me if I request a candid answer. Do you fear for your horse, or your guest?”

“Since you will have a candid answer—for my guest. The horse is of little value now, and would be worth something if broken of his tricks. Come back! Mabel will lose her wits with fright if you mount.”

“I am much honoured by Miss Conyers’s

humane anxiety ; but she must feel, after what has passed, that it is necessary I should prove I made no boast of what I dared not at least attempt.—I have no doubt as to the result.”

“ Then you have ridden, though you have no horses of your own ? ” inquired the squire, who was vexed at his own petulance, and could not but admire the respectful firmness of the young man.

“ Constantly, sir. I have frequently assisted a famous breaker (a singular character living near us) in taming the wildest colts ; besides having practised in a wandering circus to whose owner I had rendered some little service.”

“ Why did you not say so before ? ” asked Mr. Conyers bluntly.

“ You gave me no opportunity, sir, and might have thought it boasting.”

“ Ay, ay, hot young blood takes offence at trifles : I was young myself once. I am sorry for what I said ; and now, come in :—or mount, an’ you will,” seeing that the young man’s heart was set upon it.

"Thank you, sir," replied Edward with his usual open expression of countenance.

"May I choose a bridle as well as a whip?"

"Anything you please. Old Ned will show you where they are kept."

In a few minutes Edward returned, followed by the grey-headed groom, bearing the chosen bridle.

"You had better put it on yourself, sir, if you understands them things: but if you bean't used to vicious horses, don't ye mount; Fury has larnt a thing or two."

"Thank you! I understand; but I am used to all sorts of horses;" and his smile won the old man's heart, who, truth to tell, had been thrown by Fury, (as the horse had been named by general acclamation,) and entertained some jealousy of Dawkins.

"Indeed, sir, you had better not try: I can scarcely sit un; and as to managing un, it's next to nothing!" said Dawkins with considerable earnestness, as Edward prepared to put on the bridle, with the assistance of Ned.

"I know the worth of your advice, but

am not frightened. There are several ways of conquering the vicious."

"If you choose to try, sir—" muttered Dawkins, shrinking back from the keen gaze of the speaker, and offering no further opposition.

The animal submitted to his new equipment with a quietude which he rarely accorded to a stranger, and received his patting with tolerable graciousness; but Edward was not rendered less wary by this courteous conduct. As he was ready to mount, a servant brought him out a hunting-cap.

"You had better put it on," said the squire kindly.

"Thank you, sir: I had quite forgotten my head was uncovered." Then, seeing Mabel still by her father's side, half looking, and half turned away, he added, "I assure you, Miss Conyers, there is not the slightest danger to be anticipated; but, as the animal will not be subdued without a struggle, had you not better retire? By Fury's eye, I see that his present courtesy will not last long."

“ You are sure there is no danger ? ”

“ None, I feel convinced ; but you will imagine some.”

“ Do try and be a heroine for once, Mabel, and look without blenching on a prancing steed, as they say in the Seven Champions,” observed her father.

Mabel shook her head, but she did not quit the window ; and her anxiety became too intense to allow her to withdraw her gaze, though the clasped hands and pallid cheeks gave little promise of her ever becoming a heroine. The young man, gathering up the reins, placed his hand on the animal's shoulder and sprang into his seat before any present were aware of the attempt. No sooner did the horse feel his weight, than he reared so high, that the crowd (for the whole household had assembled) feared he would fall backwards. A murmur of apprehension rose, which grew in strength as the animal increased his violence ; sometimes leaping off the ground with fierce and fiery bounds ; then standing on his hind legs, and pawing with his fore feet, or plunging and

kicking, till the general opinion among the domestics that he was possessed by the Evil One, and more than mortal horse, scarcely seemed an idle jest. Even the florid cheek of the bold squire lost some of its strong colouring, and Mabel's grew paler still, though she uttered neither scream nor question; but the rider kept a firm and fearless seat. His temper was unruffled—his whip unused; and, for a time, he rather bore with the creature's rage than opposed it, merely keeping a steady hold on the rein, bending, or sitting erect, as best enabled him to defeat the endeavours to throw him: but when he had sufficiently proved to the horse himself, which began to weary with his exertions, the vanity of such a hope, his knees pressed him closer and closer, till the animal trembled beneath the pressure; whilst the flashing eye grew dull—the neck less proudly arched—and he stood quiet as a lamb, with quivering nostrils and a smoking coat. A shout of admiration rose from the crowd, above which was heard the

squire's loud view-hollo, followed by an almost equally loud "Bravely done!"

The rider, slightly relaxing his pressure, was patting the animal's neck, and, as some assert, looking towards a fair pale face, when the horse, startled by the hollo, bounded away at full speed. For an instant the rider wavered in his seat at this unexpected change;—the next showed him as firmly fixed—as much master as before. Not that he slackened the animal's speed, but, on the contrary, urged him on up a sharp hill, till he would gladly have paused for breathing-time, an indulgence denied, till, checked and tamed, at least for a time, the young man brought the horse back to its owner in a mood so gentle, that he shrank not at noise or caressing, and exhibited no further symptom of rebellion.

"Bravely done indeed!" exclaimed the squire, coming out on the lawn, and shaking Edward's hand with an almost painful warmth,—"Bravely done indeed! and you scarcely used the whip."

“No, sir. I believe there would be little call for force on most occasions, would we subdue our own tempers first: firmness will ever effect more than passion.”

“Very likely: only some cannot help being a little warm on occasion—it is their nature,—but then it is over in a minute,” replied the squire with a slight self-consciousness. “I was wrong to doubt your powers.”

“Never think of that, sir: I believe I spoke more freely than I should have done. Your whole conduct had been so kind, that I forgot we had met but yesterday, and were not old friends.”

“Old friends!—and so we are—or will be. You shall not go to-day, as you proposed, but stay at the Grange as long as you can find it agreeable; and I will mount you till the end of the season. It would be a shame such a rider should be obliged to walk—leave that to book-worms and milksops; you will do credit to my hunters, and bring my stud into still greater repute. No refusal,—or I shall be affronted, and think you have not forgiven my doubts.—

Jack!" turning to one of the numerous doers of nothing, "go to Wexton for this gentleman's portmanteau: he will give you directions."

"But, my dear sir——" began Edward.

"No 'dear sir' to me, if you refuse my invitation," replied the warm-hearted, but sometimes fiery squire. "If you don't like the Grange and its master, go!—if you do, stay!"

"Then I shall stay, most certainly," replied the young man with an animation that proved how much his own wishes were gratified by the decision. "I only meant to say, that as yet you knew nothing of me or my father."

"Hang your father! I don't care whether you had one or not," exclaimed the squire pettishly. "Such a runner and rider, with such eagerness in hunting, can neither be rogue nor coward. I would back you as a gentleman for a thousand; and what care I where you live, or where you were born? or whether you had a title in your family, or not? Say no more! but stay here quietly till tired of us."

“ I might chance to become a fixture, then, sir.”

“ With all my heart : Mabel and I find it dull sometimes ; for she takes no interest in hunting, and I can’t read and work. I owe you much for taming Fury ;—but do you think this gentleness will last ?”

“ With care, sir, I hope it may. I judge him to have a high, but not vicious spirit, that kindness and firmness will subdue. I should recommend no one’s mounting him for some days but myself, and his being groomed by a person who has not groomed him before, that he may forget his old tricks and win himself a new character :—it would be better even if his former attendant did not go near him. I have little doubt that he will prove worth many thirty guineas.”

“ Then suppose we give the charge of him to old Ned,” remarked the squire.

“ Just as you please, sir ; I am sure I don’t want the care of un,” replied Dawkins sullenly ; muttering, “ The young gentleman may find himself mistaken ;” but turning

away, as he spoke, from that young gentleman's look.

"I understand what I am saying," remarked Edward calmly: "keep you away from him, and I do not fear a relapse."

"Mind that, Dawkins! I will not have you interfere," observed Mr. Conyers in a peremptory tone that ensured obedience.

The man turned away without reply; but there was wrath in his heart against Edward from that day.

"I do not know what you will think of my forwardness, Miss Conyers, but I have accepted your father's kind invitation to remain some days at the Grange," said Edward, after expressing his hopes that she had not been much alarmed.

"I am glad of it, for I fear my father finds me but a dull companion," she replied frankly and simply.

"Mending, Mabel! mending, I hope!" observed her father. "You did not squall as some silly women would have done, though even I feared for the rider. To be sure, you looked

like a corpse; but if women will only hold their tongues, we must let them turn pale; and you had the sense to think of the cap."

"Then I owe that kindness to Miss Conyers?"

"That you do! and you look so grateful, I wish you would repay it by persuading her to mount the mare I bought for her especial use. That would be doing her a real service!"

Mabel by no means considered the service so essential, but, to her father's delight, she really did mount it, though with many misgivings; but, either thanks to young Elton's carefulness, who kept close by her side—or that the animal was, as the squire asserted, the most gentle of the gentle, she acquitted herself so well, that her father, as he kissed her cheek on lifting her from the saddle, pronounced her "a good girl," predicting that she would in time become an accomplished horsewoman, if Elton would but take her in hand. Her only reply was a smile, and playfully expressed doubt that that would

prove beyond even Mr. Elton's powers. Strange to say, she did not blush at his reply, or turn away from his animated smile; so completely had his frank and graceful manner won her confidence.

The evening seemed but short to all. The subduing Fury had firmly established Edward in the good opinion of his host, who, in his enthusiastic admiration of his horsemanship, would have vouched for his possessing every possible virtue; and each would have been a little annoyed had any kind, officious friend thought it a duty to point out the shortness of their acquaintance.

What then? Likings and dislikings have clocks of their own, which keep time by other than the common-place rules that content the herd of mankind. They are ruled by the dials of the heart—the shine or the shadow of the sun of affection. Yet, truth to say, the sun of affection is a capricious sun: it will lengthen a day to a year, make a year seem but as one fleeting day; and I would not advise a gourmand to regulate his meals by such a

dial:—he could not read the riddle of its marks.

The squire at least could not be termed romantic; and, with all due deference to the young gentleman's vanity, he was a greater favourite with the father than the daughter.

CHAPTER IX.

“WE must ride hard, or we shall be late,” said Mr. Conyers the next morning to his young guest, whom he had mounted on one of his hacks, having sent a favourite hunter on to cover for his use.

“A fine scenting-day! We shall have a capital run: feel no delicacy, but maintain the character of Dasher,” he said, as he was, some time after, exchanging the hack for the hunter, and looking to the tightening of the girths. “I feel like a boy at his first field this morning. Let the youngsters look to their laurels, for I intend to be in at the death again! There are ten years of life in the winding of that horn and the carolling of those hounds.”

It is not for man to look into futurity: well for him that it is not! But he should not

hold all as certain, of which his bounded vision cannot behold the uncertainty. Who shall say what a day may bring forth? Not long past the prime of life, the squire counted upon length of days;—in the pride of his strength, he thought to lead the chase:—he never led the chase again !

The hunters had met at the appointed place;—the weather and the scent—the relative value of various horses and hounds—the last run, and the last piece of scandal—the flirtations, births, deaths, and marriages of the whole county, (for there is no gossip like that of hunters on a hunting morning;) all these, and a thousand other matters, had been discussed:—the squire had boasted of his triumph two days before, and laughed at the majority, who, by not following him, had lost a capital run, and gained nothing but vexation:—Sir Thomas Barrett (the most heavy of heavy baronets, and master of the hounds) had asked after Miss Conyers's health with praiseworthy soberness of tone;—the brake had been drawn—the fox had broken cover—the proper num-

ber of view-hollos had been given—the hounds were close on the scent—and on swept the chase in gallant show; the early morning air (for hunters were no lie-a-beds in those days) loaded with the fragrance of the bright gorse, on whose prickly boughs hung the dew-beaded gossamer, glistening in the March sun as a silver net-work strung with diamonds.

The gentle and odorous breeze was refreshing, and on swept the hunt, as we have said, in gallant show, passing over many a mile, leaving many a straggler far behind (for the first burst had breathed unpractised steeds)—yet still on swept the chase over bank, and wild, and field; and of the few whose horses had not tired, Philip Conyers and Edward Elton were the foremost. The light weight of the latter would have enabled him to outstrip his host; but a feeling of courtesy checked his speed, and he rode side by side with the honest squire. Had a painter desired models for a hunting-piece, here they were!—bold riders, and eager sportsmen—their handsome features animated with the spirit of pursuit.

"I said I should lead the chase for many a day yet!" shouted the squire to his brother hunters just behind.

A rough broken hedge on a steep bank, with a deep ditch on the other side, was before them.

"Over!" shouted the squire to Elton. "Have no care for Dasher! he could clear twice as much; and I know you can keep your seat."

The order was obeyed, as soon as given; the young man having only hesitated because he was riding another's horse, for the fine animal, accustomed to such a much greater weight, was scarcely blown, and steed and rider stood in safety on the other side, Edward having taken the precaution to select a low part of the hedge, and, uncertain of the extent of leap, to make allowance for any probable distance.

"Take care, sir,—the ditch is very broad and deep," said Edward, pausing a moment to look back at the squire, whose horse was by no means as fresh as his own.

"The squire craning!" shouted a voice from behind.

"Dareall blown!" exclaimed another, as the gallant horse made a slight stumble.

"Philip Conyers baulked!" cried a third, coming rapidly up.

"Let me lead him over and change horses; mine is still fresh," said Edward.

"Nonsense, boy! — stand aside! — Philip Conyers was never baulked yet!" he shouted, looking back at the advancing taunters for an instant, ere, striking his spurs into his panting horse, he forced him to the leap.

The noble animal stumbled again; — still his master urged him on. He rose to the rein, exerting all his remaining strength; but his fore feet struck the top of the hedge, which crashed at his touch, and down came horse and rider into the deep ditch below, the whole weight of the powerful animal resting on the right arm and shoulder of the squire.

"Stained the scarlet!" shouted one of the foremost hunters, clearing the leap at a less perilous spot.

"Who leads the field now?" shouted another equally fortunate.

“ Hope you are not hurt,” said Sir Thom Barrett, riding on without waiting for reply.

“ I said his horse was blown,” remarked another; while some passed on without knowledge of the accident.

“ For Heaven’s sake, assist me to raise t horse, or Mr. Conyers will be crushed !” e claimed Edward, appealing to the last of t party, a sober-looking person, who had l his horse over bank and ditch, and was i mounting.

“ I will send the first man I meet,” he i plied deliberately, riding on as he spoke.

There lay the kind-hearted squire, who nev refused a favour, if in his power to gra it, lying in a ditch—the horse which he h urged to the leap to appease his pride, kno ing him to be distressed, resting on him tended only by a stranger, whilst the frien of years passed on unheeding.

“ Never mind me ! Let Dasher head t hunt, since Dareall cannot,” exclaimed M Conyers, as Edward, who had dismount

on perceiving the accident, came to his assistance.

“ Pardon me, sir : I cannot leave you thus.”

“ Why not ? My friends have passed on ; and you are but a stranger,” said the squire with a slight tinge of bitterness.

“ I would not quit you, sir, were you really a stranger ; much less one from whom I have received such kindness. I hope you are not hurt.”

“ I hope not ; but I cannot stir, with Dareall on me.”

“ Do not attempt it, lest he should struggle. I will try to remove him gently ;—happily he has not yet stirred.”

He said truly—he had not yet stirred—he never stirred again. The heart of the gallant horse had broken in the endeavour to redeem his master’s fame—to gratify his master’s pride.

“ Is Dareall hurt ?” inquired Mr. Conyers :
“ he does not try to rise.”

“ I see a labourer in the field yonder, and will call him to assist in raising the poor animal.”

“ You do not say if he is hurt,” remarked the squire, looking anxiously up into the young man’s face.

“ He is in no pain, sir—never will be again.”

“ Dead ?”

“ I fear so. Yet it is a providential thing; for had he struggled, lying beneath him as you do, your life would have been in danger.”

“ Dead !” murmured the squire. “ Poor Dareall dead !—All my doing !—I should have spared him.” And the kind squire closed his eyes with a groan, which his own sufferings had not extorted.

By the aid of the labourer, Mr. Conyers was extricated from the weight of the dead horse, but, faint and giddy, could not stand. A late straggler rode for medical assistance and a carriage, at the request of Edward, who thought of everything best for the occasion; and returned in a much shorter time than could have been hoped, having met the surgeon returning in a chaise from a distant and urgent call. After assisting to place the squire in the chaise, Edward remounted his horse to precede

the sufferer and get all ready against his arrival at the Grange.

“Break it gently to Mabel,” said Mr. Conyers in a low tone: “she is so gentle — so affectionate:—say she must bear up to nurse me. And poor Dareall!—tell Ned to send for him, and see that not a hair of his skin is touched!—he died to save my honour, and shall have honourable burial!”

“All shall be done as you would wish,” replied the young man.

“Thank you!” and the bold, strong squire again sank fainting into the corner.

“I hope you have had a capital run:—is not that what I am to say?” asked Mabel Conyers of Edward Elton, as he took his seat beside her in silence.

“Not very capital!”

She looked up at his tone, her fears taking the alarm on the instant.

“Is my kind father come home?”

“He will be here shortly.”

“You look very, very pale! Have you been thrown?”

“No.”

“Are you ill?” she inquired anxiously, ever ready to sympathise with suffering.

“Not in body ;— but pray do not alarm yourself !”

“Something dreadful has happened, Mr. Elton, or you would not look upon me so pityingly, and then turn away ! Do not deceive me ! Tell me—tell me all ! I am not so weak as some think !”

“I will tell you all, Miss Conyers ; but you must strive for firmness—you must not let your love imagine danger where there is none !”

“My father !—it is of him you would tell me ; yet you said he would come shortly—did you not ?” looking wildly into his face.

“I expect him every moment, to tell you with his own lips that you have no cause for fear. I speak but the truth,” —(seeing her doubtful)—“on my word, I would not deceive you : there has been an accident, and your kind father may require some of your gentle nursing ; but I have Mr. Horton’s assurance there is no danger !”

“ I do not think you would deceive me,” she said, looking less wildly.

“ You do me but justice. Your father bade me break it gently to his Mabel, and tell her that she must bear up to be his nurse. Do not check your tears for my presence ; but rather look upon me for a time as a kind brother, grieving as you grieve. I would rather see tears than that look of wild alarm !”

“ Tell me all, then !”

He did tell her all, so gently and so kindly, that she feared no longer, though she sorrowed still. Her tears flowed freely ; and, for a time, she did not seek to check them, weeping on as though he had been really the brother that he had begged her to consider him, till, soothed by his kindness, she joined with him in making the necessary arrangements for the comfort of the sufferer.

“ You shall see how calm I can be,—looking my hopes rather than my fears ! Coward in general, I will play the heroine now, not to add pain to pain !”

"I will not doubt you," he replied, as she tried to smile through her tears.

But he did doubt her firmness, when she should first see her father. It is so fearful, even to the firmest, to see a large, strong man with the hue of death upon his cheek — his powers gone—his strength departed! If such the feelings of a stranger—what those of a child? He would have spared her the sight till his injuries had been examined and the surgeon's duties over; but the father asked for his child, and the child would not be withheld.

"Now be calm, for your father's sake, still more than your own," said Edward gently, as he supported her into the hall, where the squire was resting in an arm-chair till he should have recovered sufficient strength to reach his room.

Stifling a groan, he spoke in a cheerful voice as his child entered the hall.

"Don't be frightened, Mabel! — there are years of life in me yet, and I shall be hunting again before the end of the season. You had better not touch me," he added, as she would

have thrown her arms round his neck. "Be a good child, and don't cry; for I shall want you to nurse me, and I cannot bear tears. Give me one kiss, and then go; for Horton, I see, is impatient to make me worse, and afterwards boast a cure."

Her lips clung to his, as though the pressure ensured his safety; but, at a sign from her father, Edward drew her gently away, and led her back to the sitting-room:—then, and not till then, did her sobs break forth.

"You promised to tell me the truth," she said, advancing eagerly to meet him as he returned to her more than an hour afterwards.

"I did; and you promised to be calm, for your father's sake."

The report was distressing to those interested in the sufferer. His collar-bone was broken, and his shoulder slightly injured; besides various bruises, and a wound in the leg, which would prevent his using it for some time to come. None of the injuries were dangerous in themselves; but the squire's full habit—the life he had led for many years, his time having

been principally passed between hard drinking and hard exercise — and his avowed determination not to submit patiently to the necessary regimen, excited reasonable fears of fever and inflammation.

“ Now that I have spoken of your father, I must speak a little of myself. As an acquaintance—may I say a friend?—of so short a standing, perhaps my remaining may appear an intrusion; yet it seems unfeeling to leave you at this moment, and Mr. Conyers has strongly urged my stay. Will you decide for me?”

“ Oh, do stay! — do not go now! — you think of everything; and you may persuade my father to attend to Mr. Horton's orders,—he is so fond of you:—yet it is selfish to ask you to remain.”

“ It is my own wish, and I only wanted your sanction to what I so much desired.”

And he did stay — day after day, week after week — till that stay was considered a matter of course, whilst a departure would have been looked on as a strange proceeding. The confinement of a sick-room, to one of the squire's

habits, who appeared, like the Indians on the first discovery of the New World, to consider that man and horse were inseparable, was a hard trial; the more hard from happening in the beginning of March, instead of the end.

“ If it had been the last day of the season, I should not so much have minded ; but the scent has lain so well ever since my fall.”

Thus murmured the squire in his impatient moods : but those moods were, considering his character and pursuits, less frequent than might have been expected, and his recovery more rapid than his child had dared to hope. Yet he sometimes raged at his doctor, declaring he wanted to exhibit him as a skeleton—sometimes at the indifference and carelessness of his brother hunters, who after the first few days called but rarely, finding that Mr. Horton was peremptory in his orders of non-admittance:—but never did he rage at his kind and gentle nurses. His child and his guest were ever with him, together or apart; soothing his sufferings, or administering to his wants,

till he of himself remarked that the cheeks of both were pale, and, much as he valued their presence, insisted that they should ride or walk every day. This injunction was enforced by the skilful surgeon, and, after a little remonstrance, submitted to by both,—the more readily when the squire, mending daily, obtained permission to admit old Ned, the grey-headed groom, who gave full reports of the state of stable and kennel, occasionally smuggling in an inhabitant of the latter, regretting that he could not do the like by one of the former; besides, rendering all the histories of each day's hunt, generally riding over to Sir Thomas Barrett's in the morning for the purpose, as well as repeating all the kind things which the villagers and others said of the squire. In short, he was found a valuable auxiliary in the task of amusing the invalid, and became a great favourite with Master Elton and Miss Mabel, as he termed them; and, as is usual, the regard was mutual.

To do justice to the squire's hunting friends, we must state that his accident was universally

regretted, even by those who were too eager in the chase to stay and assist him ; and many would have visited him on the blank days, but for the surgeon's prohibition, and the distance—Sir Thomas Barrett's, ten miles off, being almost the nearest residence. Then, when April came, and the season was over, and the dull time of the year began, some were forced to town by the entreaties of wives and daughters—some by parliamentary duties ;—some started for the round of races—and some, having turned their horses out to grass, found no means of riding over to see a man forbidden to play the hospitable host. Another source of vexation to the squire was, his hunters being idle : but this he partly remedied by insisting on Elton's riding them for the last few days of the season.

“ Ride them, as I would ride them,” he said, “ and don't think of Dareall. Poor Dareall ! thank you for seeing him buried decently.”

This, and once to old Ned, were the only times he ever mentioned his lost favourite ;

a proof to those who knew him how much he was regretted.

To Edward Elton, ever eager for action, the chase was delightful ; it was to him a mental excitement, not a mere bodily exertion, for to him it imaged the race of life ; but he would have declined the offer, had not the squire staked his favour on the acceptance, speaking sharply to Mabel, for the first time since his accident, on her turning pale at the mention, and pleading his fancied danger and her fears. Edward promised the terrified girl to be careful ; and when she saw him return unharmed, and marked her father's pleasure whilst listening to his animated description of a famous burst, she half blushed at her fright, and consented as a penance to ride with him, as her father wished, only stipulating that he and the attendant groom should be mounted on very quiet horses.

When the squire was well enough to sit in an easy chair at the window, and look on the horses and dogs led forth beneath for his especial gratification, and listen to the village

gossips with the bailiff at their head, who on various pretences found their way into his presence, he insisted that his daughter's rides should be prolonged, forgetting, in his sportsman-like anxiety that she should become a capital horsewoman, the probable consequences of such constant and encouraged intercourse between two young persons, neither frights, fools, nor cynics. His own partiality for his young guest increased every day ; and he never considered whether his daughter's might not do the same. He never asked him of his family or fortune. What did either matter to him ?—he was not going to marry him. But he was so fond of his society—in short, it became so completely a habit,—and with him habit was almost despotic,—that he considered a mention of departure as little short of an affront.

Edward Elton, on his part, sunning himself in the smiles of father and daughter, forgot his pining after action—his desire to win an independence, and quietly lingered on at the Grange, instead of proceeding to town ; and this so naturally, that the only consciousness

he showed of this being a change from his original plan, was an embarrassing debate, whether, having engaged to write to his father on his arrival in London, which should have been long since, he ought to act up to the letter, or the spirit of his engagement ;—a debate continued so long, and adjourned so often, that the letter was not written till after the squire had pronounced himself a perfect cure. It certainly required some skill and practice in diplomatic correspondence to explain why he, who had sighed and pined for action, now lingered contentedly in inactivity ; a task the more difficult since the writer could not, or would not, account for this sudden indolence.

Mr. Conyers had insisted on his acceptance of Fury ; and the young man had been compelled to consent, rather than offend the generous donor : but neither had considered how the means of its subsistence were to be provided. What did it matter ! The stable, the hay-stack, and the corn-bin were open to him as long as his master should remain at the Grange — and was not he a fixture ? Did not honest old

Ned tend him with the greatest care, and declare, "that Master Elton desarved un, for making un so gentle, and Miss Mabel like—without using the whip too?"

Miss Mabel felt no peculiar gratification in hearing Fury likened to her, as she always watched the pricking up of his ears, and the flashing of his eye, with the laudable desire of penetrating his intentions: but her father was exceedingly entertained by the comparison, and even Edward smiled,—so she smiled too; and after she had, by great persuasion, allowed his master to ride him, whilst escorting her, and had found him quiet and tractable, she ceased to speak in his disfavour, and even occasionally patted him—when Edward stood beside her.

CHAPTER X.

“ I NEVER saw a handsomer couple, or better riders,” exclaimed the delighted squire, as Mabel and Edward rode beneath his window, greeting him with playful bows as they passed. “ Take a long ride ! I shall not walk till after dinner.”

“ Miss Conyers fears it may rain late in the day, and wishes to return early for your walk,” replied Edward, checking his horse.

“ Pshaw ! rain ?—no such thing !” looking up at the sky. “ The little gipsy is afraid of her head-gear ; the hat and feathers would not like a wetting. Never heed, Mabel ; you ride so well, only now and then looking frightened, that I must present you with new woman’s furniture. She really does you credit, Edward :—I believe now that you may teach her

anything." Then beckoning him to come nearer, he added in a lower tone, "Don't let her get wet: her poor mother died of consumption, some say; and Horton thinks her delicate."

"Do not fear, sir; I would guard her with my life. But if you think rain likely, we had better not go far,—habitations not being as plentiful as corn-fields hereabouts."

"It will not rain these four hours: so be off!"

"You have brought me a new road, and I do not know where I am, or in what direction lies the Grange," remarked Edward, looking up, and round, instead of into the face of his companion, which had been his occupation for some time past.

"Lost! quite lost!—so you must submit to my guidance, for once, instead of my always submitting to yours. We are going to enter Astell Park, and you must look round and admire, as all do, and have done for centuries."

"And the Grange, where is that?" he inquired, looking up, rather than round.

“The Grange!—oh, that is a good seven miles off! Are you weary of your horse, or your companion, that you look so troubled at my answer?”

“Fury is in high favour still;—and need I plead to the last charge?”

“Oh no! certainly not, since you do not wish it,” she said a little hurriedly, stooping to adjust her habit.

“Then you acquit me of wearying, or being weary?”

“Old Ned says you are always asking odd questions about everything,” she replied, without raising her head.

“Old Ned says a great many strange things; remember, he compared you to Fury: but I must ask another question, in despite of him. Are we pursuing the nearest road to the Grange?”

“I believe so.”

“Then what think you of a canter on this rare piece of level road?”

“Certainly!” striking her horse with the whip.

A few minutes brought them to a handsome lodge, with everything about it in the most perfect order; the old woman who opened the gate looking like some venerable domestic of a kind master who had thus provided for her comfort.

“ You think my conduct strange; but the riddle is soon read: I anticipate a thunder-storm. Had you not better rest in the lodge till it shall have passed? There is a shed for the horses.”

“ Then you really believe that I have an overweening care for my feathers,” she replied, a little reproachfully.

“ Indeed, I do not! It is I who fear lest you should get wet.”

“ Let us ride on, then; it will scarcely rain yet; and there is a farm-house outside the other lodge, where it would better please my father that we should rest.”

“ Why so?” he inquired, as they rode on through the park.

“ Because my father and Mr. Astell are not on visiting terms.”

“ Yet you ride through his park.”

“ It is a public road.”

“ That is a pity, and a detriment to such a beautiful place, where art seems to have combined with nature to produce perfection. But perhaps it does not pass near the house.”

“ Very close, I am sorry to say.”

“ Why sorry ?”

“ I scarcely know, for I like to look upon the old house ; but I believe I am sorry lest it should annoy Mr. Astell.”

“ Then you know him ?”

“ I have never even seen him.”

“ You are very philanthropic, to grieve for the annoyance of one whom you have never seen. If you feel thus for a stranger, what may not your friends hope ?”

“ I have not seen Mr. Astell, certainly ; but I have heard many speak of him. The poor seldom name him without a blessing ; and the village of Astell is a striking contrast to that of Ranford. At the first, order rules ; at the last, disorder.”

“ Why not visit then ? He must be your nearest neighbour.”

“ I know no other reason than disinclination. Mr. Astell is the only person, excepting poachers or fox-killers, of whom my father thinks or speaks with unfriendly feelings ; and I have heard that he assisted those who contended for a right of way through Astell Park : but this happened before I was born.”

“ That is the reason, then, that you would not enter the lodge : but you do not mind riding through the park.”

“ I would not turn from the public road, and should have felt some delicacy in riding there, considering the share my father had had in throwing it open to the public, had Mr. Astell not sent a polite message begging none of the family to refrain on that account. I pass through but seldom, and my father never ; though, I believe, in return he grants Mr. Astell permission to send carts through some of his fields. I once heard that there had been other disputed points which had increased the unfriendly feeling between them.”

“ You do not know what first caused dissension ?”

“ I do not ; unless the tale of an old woman in the village is correct, that he too had loved my mother, before he became possessed of Astell Court.”

“ Was your mother very beautiful ?”

“ So I have always heard.”

“ And you are like her ?” inquired Edward eagerly, thinking of the portrait at Beauchamp, to which he still sometimes fancied she bore a resemblance.

“ What a many questions you ask ! as I was told the other day, when, with more zeal, I fear, than wisdom, I was trying to settle a dispute concerning the rightful possession of a top.”

“ I admit the charge ; but bear with me this once. Do you resemble your mother ?”

“ Some say so.”

“ Have you no portrait of Mrs. Conyers ?”

“ None. She never had her likeness taken. — But why do you question me so eagerly ? You could not have known my mother, who died a few months after my birth.”

“ You may fairly ask ; but my answer will

scarcely assure you of my sanity. I was once so fascinated with a mere portrait, as to have it ever before me, sleeping or awake. Even now I cannot banish the belief that the original did not die broken-hearted, as they said, but that she will influence my future fate. You resemble the portrait when animated; but when silent, the expression is so different, that I scarcely remark a similitude of feature: it was this resemblance which induced my questions. Will you not pardon the impertinence, connected, as you are in my mind, with that beautiful portrait?"

"You wish to enlist my vanity on the side of your imagination," she said with a heightened colour. "It could not have been my mother; and I know nothing but your roaming the world like the knights errant of the olden times in search of the original,—some captive princess, doubtless."

"Do not send me from you for my folly! Rather let me believe you the original—the lovely one who is to influence my destiny."

A vivid flash of lightning startled her horse

before Mabel could reply—the thunder rolled in the distance, and a large rain-drop fell on the upturned brow of the young man as he gazed on the heavy sky.

“There is no time to lose—the clouds will pour down their torrents in less than five minutes;” and Edward, seizing the rein of her horse, which was curveting at the lightning, forced it into a gallop. “Keep your hand down, and a firm seat. Now to show your horsemanship!” he added as the lightning flashed before her face, and the thunder rolled above her head with a thousand echoes, her steed bounding and starting at every flash and roll.

“Had I not been so interested in our subject, I should have marked the clouds, and better provided for your safety. Do not slacken your speed or raise your hand; the rain will be here in a few moments, and with this lightning you must not shelter under a tree.—And this owing to my folly!” he muttered, as he rode on by her side, keeping his eye on her starting horse, ready to seize the

rein again, should he see the slightest occasion, though the former character of Fury made him loath to do so without absolute need.

Mabel seemed much less alarmed than he could have expected ; and though she was very pale, her sweet voice reassured him.

“ Do not fear for me ; I do not fear for myself when you are near.”

He felt that she confided in him :—he would not have yielded that conviction for all the world could give.

The lightning flashed more brightly—the thunder, with its quick sudden crashes and hollow rolling, followed more closely, and her horse every moment became less manageable ; whilst Fury, who had hitherto conducted himself admirably, showed symptoms of rebellion as the vivid light shot across his eye-balls. Still Edward Elton kept up the speed of both, and an exclamation of thankfulness burst from his lips, as a sudden turn in the road placed Astell Court before him, in all the grandeur of the past, and the order of the present.

It was a beautiful specimen of the architecture of the time of James the First; but though the hue of the grey stone was softened and harmonised by age, there was not one symptom of decay;—nor, like the Grange, did it show how families had increased, and wealth diminished. There were no ill-proportioned excrescences to shock the critical: if the house had been added to since its erection,—which, from its arrangement, appeared improbable,—those additions had been in the same style, and formed no dissight. The park, the lawn, the house, were in perfect keeping. An elegant iron railing defended the beautiful shrubs on the lawn (some in their full spring bloom and loveliness, flinging their fragrance far around,) from the incursion of the deer; whilst superb bronze gates at each extremity admitted visitors.

Edward's quick glance saw much of this in an instant, and, ever ready for action and prompt in his measures, he decided at once on placing Mabel in safety beneath the projecting porch, urged to greater decision by

the increasing unruliness of her horse, and the large drops that began to fall. One of the bronze gates stood open as though to invite their entrance: and he did not consider the standing of a gentleman, probably Mr. Astell, at a window, as any bar to his project.

“Be not alarmed! another minute will place you in safety within the porch,” he said, springing from his own horse, seizing the rein of hers, which was now plunging violently, and dragging him on by main force towards the house.

“Not there! — my father may not like it.”

“Let the fault be mine—this is no time to hesitate;” and before she could reply, he had lifted her from the saddle and borne her within the porch.

A flash—so full, so vivid, that it gleamed as the flaring of torches into the dark porch, showing the pale face of Mabel to her preserver, and dazzling the sight, lit up the heavens for a moment, making the sky like a vault of flame. There was a strange and

rushing sound, as of a mighty rocket passing through the air—a cry of pain—and then a heavy fall, whilst the thunder crashed and rolled. Ere the light had died away, the clouds poured down their torrents, as though the bounds of nature had been burst, and some airy sea was dashing down upon the earth. The smoke rose up from the ground like a mist; but through it could be seen, stretched on the velvet lawn, torn with its struggles in the death-pang, the horse from which Mabel had been snatched—the lately flashing eye now glazed, the lately bounding limb now motionless.

Mabel's head sank unconsciously on the shoulder of her preserver as she understood her deliverance, and murmured her gratitude to him and to her God; whilst earth held not happier heart than Edward Elton's, as he pressed the cold hand placed in his to tell her thanks, better than her faltering words.

“Pray come into the house,” urged some one beside them, whose first address had been unheeded.

“ I shall be obliged to you, for I fear Miss Conyers is fainting,” replied Edward to the kind entreaty of the owner of the mansion, a tall thin man, slightly bowed, with a high forehead, and features impressed with intellect and benevolence.

“ I am better now—not faint,” said Mabel, withdrawing from the support of her preserver with a conscious blush, though her faltering step was a proof that the support had not been unrequired.

The porch had been so dark, and Mabel’s face so completely turned away, that Mr. Astell had no idea to whom he was giving shelter, till she entered the library, when his sudden start and changing cheek proved his instant recognition :—years had not effaced the sufferings of his youth.

“ Miss Conyers ! I cannot be mistaken ;—there are your mother’s brow and eye, and her angel smile.”

Tears dimmed his eyes as he looked into her pale face, and his hand shook as he led her to her seat. For a few moments neither spoke ;

—a cloud came over the gazer's brow—his features wore a saddened expression—the past came up before him. His guests respected his sorrow and were silent; and, after a time, recovering from his reverie, he ruled himself to play the host.

“ Pardon me, Miss Conyers, for this inattention—this forgetfulness; it should not have been, but I had never hoped to see her child beneath my roof, looking so like her too when we first met. I fear I may not believe that you came voluntarily to cheer an old man's desolation; but if I must thank the storm for your presence, I will still bid you welcome. May I not hope that Mabel Duncombe's child will regard me as a friend?” taking her hand kindly within his. “ You are silent! Do not think I am at enmity with Philip Conyers: that has long since passed away. I would have you look upon me as a second father: I loved your mother—will not her child regard me as a friend? Will she not sometimes come and see me?”

The tears stood in Mabel's eyes; for she

thought how hard it was to be parted from those we love—and harder still to love, and not be loved again.

“I will—I do regard you as a friend; and, with my father’s leave, will see you often.”

“Your father!” he exclaimed abruptly; then checking himself, added more calmly: “yes: he has a right to your love and duty. Tell him that he who loved Mabel Duncombe, and saw her given to another, pleads to him for the visits of her child. He cannot—will not refuse.”

“I hope not,” she said; but she spoke doubtingly.

“And you will plead for my wishes?”

“Indeed I will; they are my own.”

“Thank you! your mother, were she living, would wish it should be so. I am but a neglectful host, or I should have ordered refreshments, and welcomed your companion, to whom you are so much indebted. It was a fearful sight, that falling bolt! Will you introduce me, Miss Conyers? We are old friends already,” he added with a smile.

“ Mr. Elton,” said Mabel, blushing as she named him.

The young man advanced from the window to which he had delicately turned during the late conversation.

Mr. Astell started back in greater agitation than when he had looked on Mabel.

“ The very same ! though years have passed—and yet not quite the same,” he murmured, whilst his guests looked on him in surprise.

“ Who are you that stand before me, as of old, young and full of strength, whilst I am worn and weary ? Tell me quickly !” he exclaimed, going close up to Edward, and looking keenly into his face.

“ My name is Edward Elton, sir.”

Mr. Astell shook his head with a mournful look, and turned away.

“ I knew not that the past could have so unmanned me, as to make me think the grave had given up its dead. No ! no ! all I loved are in the tomb—they live but in my memory !” Then mastering his emotion, he again advanced to the young man with an extended

hand. "I beg your pardon for this strange reception. Your likeness to one I highly regarded, now long since dead, must plead as my excuse; and were it only for that likeness, and the service you have this day done to Mabel Conyers, you must look upon me as a friend; and tax my friendship, should you want its aid."

Edward thanked him warmly, though with no idea of ever availing himself of his offer; and refreshments being ordered, Mr. Astell played the polite and hospitable host.

The storm having ceased, Edward proposed sending to the Grange for the carriage to convey Miss Conyers home, but Mr. Astell's had long since been ordered to be in readiness; and though Mabel, with some of her former awe of her father, feared his disapproval, she could not bring herself to decline an offer so kindly made. In her embarrassment she looked to Edward, who settled the point at once, by accepting the proffered carriage, saying, that as Mr. Conyers had committed her to his care, he was bound to arrange for her safe return.

Mr. Astell smiled as he saw her appealing

look, and heard his reply ; and the young man coloured at the smile, sad as it was.

“ Remember your promise to plead my wishes to your father,” said Mr. Astell, as he handed his fair guest to the carriage.

“ I will not forget.”

“ Then I shall see you again soon.”

“ I hope so ;” and the carriage drove on, leaving Edward to mount Fury, who, when deserted by his master, had with laudable sagacity discovered the way to the stables, where he had been well taken care of.

“ The young fancy life perpetual sunshine. Not so ! there are storms—destroying—devastating—as that which has passed. There are faithless friends, and other perils in our paths. You tread on flowers now—should these fade, or your path become rough, apply to me ; I may bid the flowers rebloom—may smooth the rugged path. Come boldly. Now farewell !”

Before Edward could reply to this singular address, Mr. Astell had re-entered the house ; and the young man, mounting his impatient horse, was in a few minutes riding by the side

of the carriage, and talking to Mabel, each vying with the other in praise of Mr. Astell, lauding his kindness, his talents, his elegant manners, his varied information, shown in his remarks on the treasures of his library.

The squire had been very anxious and fidgetty for his daughter's safe return, (the lightning having shivered a tree in the park,) though the remembrance that Edward was with her had checked his alarm; and, in his joy at her providential escape, he was far less annoyed than Mabel had expected on learning where she had taken shelter; nay, he approved of the whole of young Elton's conduct, who took the blame upon himself: and on hearing Mr. Astell's message, promised that she should call upon him occasionally. The strongest symptoms of his former unfriendly feelings not being quite subdued, were the greatness of his donation to the servants accompanying the carriage, and his sudden order to Mabel during the evening to send Mr. Astell some rare Indian sweatmeats, the present of a distant relative, whom he had once

assisted. From those he liked, the squire took as frankly as he gave; from those he did not like, he could ill endure accepting a favour; or, if compelled to do so, his first thought was to repay it fourfold.

“What service will you do me next?” said Mr. Conyers grasping the young man’s hand. “Think if I had lost Mabel! I should have been a blighted tree indeed!—no one to smile on me—no one to nurse me, for I may not have another child alive;” and the squire grew sad at the thought, for he had learnt, during his illness, the value of the tender cares of love; the touching beauty of the smile of affection. He had felt there are words, and looks, too precious for the mines of earth to purchase; he had begun to feel the spell of home, how its gentle ties can be as bonds upon the soul—as fetters on the heart, too soft to gall, too strong to burst. He felt as he had never felt since his wife’s death, and scarcely then; for, though not of keen penetration, he had understood there was little sympathy between them — a mist be-

fore the sunshine of her love. He loaded her with gifts—he would have yielded her his favourite hunter (what he prized most, next to herself,) had she desired it: he absolutely sent to Paris to procure her ornaments, though blaming himself the while as a bad patriot, and she received all with smiles and gentle thanks; and yet he had a fancy, though he knew not on what grounded, that she was not happy, and that she loved him not as he loved her. She never thwarted him—he sometimes wished she had—his will was ever her law: but then she was so silent, and so quiet; and, except with regard to her children, appeared to have no desire—to take no interest—and her smile was sad, even when she looked on them. He did not comprehend the symptoms of a breaking heart—of a gentle, loving being sinking unresistingly beneath its sorrow—withering—dying—as the tender woodbine torn from the trunk to which it clung.

The squire was a man ruled by habits rather than impressions—little subject to sudden impulses; and, though one of the kindest

of human beings, not formed to be the victim of a lasting sorrow. He disliked new things, unless they harmonised with his old customs; but these new things once become old, were firmly established in his favour. He felt much more for the loss of his wife than many had imagined possible, but habit and hunting soon reconciled him to the change. Many years had elapsed since his home had been endeared to him by the smiles of affection; but it still possessed powerful attractions in his eyes, from having been the abode of his ancestors for centuries, and his own since his birth, to say nothing of its excellent cellar, stables, and kennel. Shunning female society since the death of Mrs. Conyers; having no relatives residing near; holding book-learning in no great repute; with an active body and indolent mind, hunting became a habit—a necessary excitement; and, yielding to the opinions of his time amongst country squires, he rated a man's strength, wisdom, and good fellowship, according to the quantity of wine he could drink without dropping from his chair.

This yielding was, particularly in the first instance, rather what he considered a good-natured compliance with the wishes of others, or from the necessity of showing his hospitality as host, than from inclination ; but a short time inured him to the sight of an immortal being depriving himself of reason—his noblest gift, his highest distinction—with a want of self-control not equalled by the brute with only instinct for his guidance. He not only learned to look on this sinking to a level with the brute, in others, without disgust, but to practise the same himself, when tempted by a carouse ; and to speak of it with a levity which, in the present day, would shock even those who shun not the debasing sin as they should ; but his late accident, and long confinement, had awakened more serious and desirable thoughts. Withdrawn from the vortex of evil habit ; not subject to the solicitations of his riotous companions ; tended and watched over by his gentle child, who had been taught to know the corruption of man's natural heart, (though only judging severely of herself,) and

conversing with Edward Elton, for whom his affection and esteem continued to increase, and who, however the pride and presumption of youth and a high spirit might sometimes lead him into error, usually judged acts by the word of God—not by the wills of men; the squire began to acquire a better knowledge of his duties to his Creator and his brother man; and when sufficiently recovered to kneel beside his child and his young guest in the simple village church, his prayers were characterised by a fervour and humility which they had not before possessed. No longer a form of words carelessly uttered, they were the outpouring of a heart that, brought to consider the error of its ways by a providential escape from sudden death, and subdued by suffering, turned to its Maker and its Saviour with a faith and lowliness which it had never felt before. Kind, generous, and honourable, the squire had long received the praise of man; but in self-knowledge, and self-denial, he had been lamentably deficient. His had been hitherto a darkened mind, but a better light was dawning on it:

time was to show if the Sun of Righteousness would shine upon him in his noonday glory. He began to think with regret and disgust of the riotous revels in which he had once borne a part; and to more than suspect that as the master of a household, and the possessor of property, it was his duty to look to the morals and the comforts of his dependants. These convictions were, as yet, but faintly imprinted on his mind; for, as we have said, he was not a man of sudden impulses: but they were deepening as time rolled on. He was becoming an altered person; changed in his principle of action—unchanged in many of his tastes. The days were not long in the society of Mabel and Edward, though the hunting was over—the shooting not commenced; and when a letter arrived from Mr. Durnsford announcing a speedy visit, he received the intelligence, and repeated it to his daughter, with an indifference strongly opposed to the pleasure with which such an announcement had hitherto been heard. His home did not now require Mr. Durnsford's presence to make it pleasant.

And how did Mabel receive the news? With the remark: "Mr. Durnsford was very kind, and cured me of some of my fears."

How did Edward Elton hear of the visit? With a slight start—and the question: "Who is Mr. Durnsford?"

"An old friend of mine, who gave Mabel good advice about ruling horses and dogs. I have no doubt you will like him," replied the squire.

"As the friend of yourself, and Miss Conyers, I shall be sure to do so," said the young man with a cleared-up brow.

CHAPTER XI.

It was a lovely day in June when Mr. Conyers, now quite recovered, entered the drawing-room where Mabel sat at her embroidery, with Edward at a little distance, sometimes reading Milton, sometimes pointing out the beauties of the author to his attentive listener, sometimes looking at the fair girl in silence, and bending towards her to catch the tones of her low, sweet voice.

“ I have been consulting the mason about repairing the lodge as you suggested, and he thinks it will answer admirably. You are a treasure, Edward ! I wonder how we got on without you ! Indeed, I can scarcely fancy there was a time when you were not here, I am so accustomed to regard you as a fixture. Would that you were my son ! ”

“Would that I were!” replied the young man with a start of pleasure.

“Thank you for the wish, my boy; you must consider me as a parent, then!” exclaimed the gratified squire, laying his hand on his shoulder; in semblance, or in reality, perfectly unconscious of any plan by which this might be accomplished. “Poor Philip!” continued the squire with a sigh, “I wish he had never left me, or that he would return like you. He is long in coming, and I pine now as I never pined before to hold him in my arms—to lay my blessing on his head. I used to think the blame all his; but lately I have feared that I was quick, and rash; I should have been more indulgent to his youth, the wilfulness of a mere boy, whom, it may be, I had let run too wild. I fear that I have neither ruled myself, nor others, as I should have done; but the bold and the strong do not think how soon death may come—do not like to own themselves weak and erring. They are hardened when they should be grateful, you must teach me better, Mabel: speak to

me of my good sister, who would fain have made me as herself. I used to laugh at her fancies, as I called them ; but a sick bed teaches other lessons. Bless you, Mabel !" kissing his daughter's brow, who had risen and passed her arm round his neck. " Oh that my boy were here to share the blessing ! Sometimes the thought will cross me that he will come, but not till I am gone. If so, tell him I bless—I pardon him ! and, if I have erred, he must forgive me. I have my misgivings, though Durnsford would not say I had been harsh. I never guessed he would have taken me at my word. Mind, Mabel, that I leave my blessing for him."

" Leave it ? Oh no, give it !"

" I pray it may be so ! but I have no right to expect it, and have strong forebodings."

" The lingering effects of your late illness," said Edward, taking his hand.

" It may be so," replied the squire more gaily, recovering from a mood so unusual to him. " Away with you, girl ! you will choke me," he continued, putting the clinging Mabel

gently from him. "Away with you, I say, I promised Martha Wilford that you should go and see her."

"Martha Wilford! If you have been talking with her, no wonder at forebodings! But surely she has no wish for my presence: I am no favourite of hers."

"She came out as I passed her gate, remarking in her usual ungracious tone, that she had been ill—as she had heard I had been, and bade me take care, for death came when none thought of his coming; and then she added, with her awful manner, that you must go down to see her, for that she had vowed never to sit down within the Grange, till my boy came back."

"I hope you did not promise I should go," observed Mabel discomposed.

"As an old servant, I did not like to deny her; and she is an awful person to gainsay. You are not afraid, Mabel?"

"Not afraid," said Mabel with a heightened colour; "but there is something so strange about her, and the villagers tell such wild

tales, and she frowned so on me the only time I ever saw her, that I would gladly avoid the visit."

"Strange manners, and wild tales indeed!" repeated her father musingly, recurring to the past. "I could never understand—and did not like her. Not that I believe what the silly people say about a dark figure in the churchyard at night, and the ground disturbed in the morning, and strange sights and sounds about her dwelling. All nonsense!" Yet the squire did not look as if he thought it all nonsense; and his voice was not as loud as usual. "This is nothing: she nursed Philip well—doted on him, and has never been the same since he went, though I think she fostered his bold spirit. You should go, were it only for her love to him; and you need not be afraid, for she desired that Edward should accompany you."

"I, sir?" asked Edward in surprise.

"Why, I thought she would not see strangers," remarked Mabel, her terror gone at this announcement.

“ Yes: you, Edward; she says you saw her once, and promised to go again. I think she muttered something about her cat.”

“ I saved her cat from some dogs; and got scratched for my gallantry, and rated into the bargain, for she thought at first I had set the animals on; but when I denied the cruelty, she stared in my face as if I had been some marvellous monster, insisted on my going into her cottage, washed my scratches, and persisted in arranging my hair, all which courtesies I would fain have declined, for, though professing the most friendly feelings, there was a something so grim and awful in her attentions, that I could not prize them as I should. I hope she is not going to claim me as an old acquaintance, or I shall take to a mask. Ever since I began my wanderings, I have encountered persons who appeared to know me; even you, I fancied, looked keenly at me when first we met.”

“ So I do now, sometimes. Your face never seemed strange to me—yet I cannot make out whom you are like: but then, to

be sure, I never did remember people's names, and not always their features."

"I am half afraid to encounter strangers, these recognitions are so awkward; and no one ever tells me whom I resemble," observed Edward, a little provoked. "If I must go to the old woman, I will compel her to tell the name of my shadow."

"I do not think the Evil One himself could compel her to what she did not like," remarked the squire drily. "They say she can read fortunes—you had better get her to tell yours and Mabel's—and you can ask of Philip's," he added with assumed indifference, but real earnestness, thereby proving that however unimaginative was his general character, there was a little superstition in its composition.

"I will try what knowledge I can acquire," replied Edward gaily; and in a few minutes he and Mabel were on their way to Nurse Wilford's cottage.

"Have you a brother, then?" inquired Edward of his companion. "I never but once before heard such a relative alluded to; and

then so vaguely, that, concluding he had died, I asked no questions."

"I hope I have a brother, though I have never seen him; and the subject is so painful to my father that I rarely name it. I have heard from others, that he was a fine, high-spirited boy, indulged by his nurse, who doted on him, as did my father once. I do not know how that love was lessened, though I believe my brother did not always show a child's obedience; but spoke proudly, (requiring what could not be granted,) and on refusal threatened to run away. In the heat of the moment, my father dared him to the act:—the next morning he was gone, and only a few lines left to say that he would not return till he had acquired an independance; but that, should he die in the endeavour, his death should be duly notified. He was quite a boy then. From that time, notwithstanding every inquiry, nothing was heard of him for years, till he wrote to my father asking forgiveness, and requesting permission to visit the Grange on returning from a voyage which he was on the point of under-

taking. The permission and forgiveness were readily granted, and for some time he was daily expected; but many months have passed since then, and he is still away. I heard most of this from Mr. Durnsford, who is anxious for his return, seeing how much my father's heart is set upon it. Martha Wilford was his nurse, and disliked me from the idea that I might rival him in the affections of my parents: it is strange, therefore, that she should send for me."

"She cannot dislike you now," remarked Edward, looking at the lovely face set off by its becoming chip hat—the white bodice tight to the delicate shape, with the full flounced skirt — and the little feet in their pointed shoes, that trod the turf as lightly and as noiselessly as though a spirit moved beside him.

Edward was right: Martha Wilford did not dislike her now, whatever she might have done in former times. She came out of her cottage to meet her guests; and if her manner was strange, wayward, and at times awful, it was still evident that her views towards both were

friendly. She ushered them into her little parlour with a greeting and demeanour far above her station ; and if there was a something chilling even in her kindness, it appeared the consequence of her long habit of seclusion, or peculiar turn of mind, not any deficiency in good will. Mabel would have preferred taking a seat on the bench in the garden, the flowers glowed so brightly beneath the summer sun, the birds sang so sweetly from the verdant boughs, and the bees flitted from sweet to sweet, with such a soothing, happy hum ; but her hostess would not permit it, and, as Mr. Conyers had said, there was that in Martha Wilford which made no one anxious to gainsay her. She seldom left her rather lonely abode, except from necessity ; she received no suspicious-looking visitors—no evil deed was proved against her ; if any had the boldness to consult her, she gave good, if not palatable advice, for mind or body ; she interfered — she quarrelled—with none, and yet rarely was being more dreaded, or more censured ; but the latter always under the breath, with a sharp glance over the shoulder

to make sure that the black dame, as the children had named her from her dress, was beyond hearing; for though none could clearly explain on what the idea was grounded, the existence of the idea was certain—not a villager but believed that the dame was possessed of powers beyond ordinary women—in plain language, most thought her leagued with the Wicked One; and her constant attendant, the large tabby cat, (the one saved by Edward,) was looked on with dread as a familiar spirit. Such fancies among ignorant villagers were almost universal at the time of this tale; and witches and cats, the latter generally black, were considered inseparable. The black dame was too keen not to know the estimation in which she was held; but, either as a matter of indifference, or pleasure, since it saved herself and cat from molestation and the visits of the village gossips, she took no pains to dispel the evil opinion. The birds built unmolested in her garden, for no boy was bold enough to enter her domains even to rob a nest; if she met any in her rare walks, the curtsies could

not have been lower had she been the lady that, in good truth, she looked; and if a frown came on her brow as she marked the terror of the children, or overheard the mother hush their infant's cries by the horror of her name, it made no change in her mode of life, and the muttered words: "Fools! they make bugbears to frighten themselves, as well as their children," had more of scorn than of wrath. If none could prove that she committed an evil deed, all could tell that she omitted a good one. The black dame had not been seen at church since the departure of her nursling; he seemed the only link that had bound her to society, and when he went she stood alone—apart from her kind—like some solitary tree scathed by the lightning.

Such was the woman, who, with a stately air more befitting a queen than an ex-nursemaid, insisted on her young guests entering her parlour, instead of lingering in the garden.

"No:" she said, in a decided tone, "leave the flowers to the bees, and the sunshine to the birds, and all bright things to the young"

who have known neither sin nor sorrow; but the darkness and the shadow suit the black dame, and she must have her way. Thwart her not! she seeks your good, but she will not be crossed. She is lonely and stricken, but she has not yet fallen. Let those beware who dare her power! Enter!"

Mabel did as commanded, but drew closer to Edward, as she did so. Martha Wilford saw the motion, and read its meaning.

"Why do you fear me, Mabel Conyers? I served your mother—I would serve you, and I can serve you, though you think it not. If I smiled not on you as a babe, what of that? I am changed since then, and war not with the gentle. And you, Edward Elton, why do you look as though you, too, feared?"

"Fear! and a woman!" replied the young man indignantly. "I fear you not."

For some moments each gazed keenly into the face of the other, and then the woman turned away.

"True! You fear me not, and you need

not fear me, for I would serve you both. You fear none, for you come of a bold and daring race—ay, and a proud one too, though a courteous: but look that your pride come not before a fall. Ask your father if such things cannot be? If one shock of the earthquake may not level all?”

“What do you know of me or my father?” he inquired eagerly.

“That one flies from men—the other to them. That the one trusts none, and the other trusts all, and each deems himself the wisest;” replied the woman calmly, and as though smiling at the folly of both.

“Where learnt you this?” he demanded, starting at the knowledge which she displayed.

“Where learnt I this?” she replied with a scornful smile. “Is this such wondrous knowledge? An idiot could have read it in that bold, open brow, and frank address.”

“Pshaw! But how know you of my father?”

“How know I many things? Ask the cottagers who hush their babies with my name.”

“This is folly,” replied the young man quickly, though involuntarily influenced by her mysterious manner. “I am neither idiot nor coward, that I should believe in your supernatural powers.”

“Believe as you please. The idiot lingers on his way—the coward fears to ask his own heart—Why?”

Edward Elton started, and his cheek flushed the deeper as he caught her triumphant smile.

“Woman ! who are you ?”

“The decider of your fate, and the fate of others.”

“It is false ? Under heaven, I decide my fate myself.”

The woman laughed a scornful laugh.

“Why, the toils will be round you ere you know them set, — the destroyer on you ere you guess him for a foe. I know you, boy : there is no heart more easily ensnared. Such as your father was, such are you.”

“Again I ask what know you of my father or of me ? Have we met before ?” looking at her.

“ Well ! what say you ? Have we met before ? ” she demanded coldly, meeting his scrutiny.

“ No ! ” he replied, after vainly endeavouring to recall her features to his mind.

“ Wrong ! we have met before, ” laying her hand on his arm.

“ Where ? where ? ”

“ No matter—ask not where ? ” she said in a tone from which all bitterness had vanished, whilst her features lost their stern expression, and the hand upon his arm trembled as she looked upon him. “ Ask not !—enough that we have met. I am not as callous as men deem me ; the heart, though seared by wrongs, has still some kindly feelings left ; and as I look on you the visions of my younger days come back upon me. Younger and happier days ; ere I listened to the charmer—ere I yielded to the tempter. Boy ! boy ! ” and she grasped his arm with iron force, whilst her glance was wild, and her frame convulsed—
“ look you to your steps, if you would keep light heart and open brow ! Tread not the

ways of crime!—the guilty know no rest! Slaves—bondsmen to their sin—there is no peace by day or night. The sun but shines to mock—the midnight stillness is rebuke!” Then, marking his surprise, she continued more calmly, “I have said that I would serve you, but not yet: there is another dearer still who must be righted first; and there is one I would still spare. Be patient, and be wary!”

“How may I trust you, if I know you not? and how can you serve me?” he demanded, feeling the power of her strange and commanding manner, and yet unwilling to admit that he did so;—“Give me some sign!” She bent towards him, and her low whisper came distinctly on his ear.

“That portrait at Beauchamp Park!—You shall stand in her presence—her arms around your neck—her lips upon your brow!”

“When?—where?” he demanded eagerly.

But the woman turned away in silence; and a little malice mingled in her quiet smile as she placed chairs for her guests, and motioned them to be seated.

“Tell me,” he demanded still more eagerly, “whose is that portrait, and when shall we meet?”

She was still silent, looking as though she saw him not.

“At least tell me how you know of my visit to Beauchamp? Strange, that all know me and I know none!”

“How I know?” she repeated in an elevated tone. “Have I not said that I have means of knowledge which you know not of? There are tidings come on the night-wind to the lonely listener; there are signs and tokens in the summer sky to her who reads them rightly. Be ruled by her who sees and hears what the dull and the blind see not, hear not.”

“This is worse than folly, woman: I believe not such things. I am not to be ruled by aught but reason.”

“By reason or by interest will I rule you, then,” she replied, after a brief scrutiny. “You are not quite as unbelieving as you would seem; yet I cannot rule you as I would the multitude. I will stand your friend the more

for this very boldness, but I will not be crossed, or hurried on."

"Then you will tell me of that portrait?"

"No; I have said of the past all I will say now! Vex me not by further questions!" waving her hand with a haughty motion to enforce his silence.

It was a splendid picture! that low dark room, with its raftered ceiling—its black oak mantel-piece—its small casement, partly shaded by ivy and dark creepers; and the noon-day sun shining in through the leafy screen, with strong and garish light upon the bold open brow and glowing cheek of the youth; on the gentle and touching beauty of the timid maiden; and on that awful woman, in her black dress and snow-white cap, seated in a high-backed chair opposite to her young guests,—the remains of her haughty beauty still to be seen—her keen dark eye flashing with the consciousness of power—the seeming humility with which her hands were crossed on her bosom belied by her proud bearing! It was a study for a Rembrandt, with its deep shadows and its strong

gleaming lights—the passion and pride of the old, and the frankness and gentle beauty of the young !

And she, — the hostess ! — that stern and haughty woman—but a menial ? How could she sit there as a queen, commanding, receiving the homage of her vassals ?—as a judge, pronouncing doom ?

After a brief silence, she spoke abruptly, her searching gaze fixed on the timid Mabel, who half started from her seat at the sharp question,

“ Why is not Philip Conyers returned to his father’s house ? ”

“ I know not,” replied Mabel, timidly.

“ You know not !—and who should know but a sister ? ”

“ I have never seen—I have never heard from my brother.”

“ But your father—he has heard ? ”

“ Not for months : not since he wrote to promise him a welcome.”

There was a change of expression in the dark dame’s features ; but her guests could not read

its meaning. Neither made a comment; and she continued more impressively, bending as though not to lose one single tone—one changing look.

“Speak, Mabel Conyers! and speak truly! Do you wish that brother to return?”

“So much—so very much! If you know where he is, implore him to return. My father pines for his presence!”

The keenness of her scrutiny relaxed, for it was impossible to doubt the speaker's sincerity; and a gleam of satisfaction lit up her care-worn features.

“Enough! he shall return! I see—I know it. He shall stand in his father's halls—he shall rule on his father's lands!—but neither I nor Philip Conyers shall behold it!”

Her exultation died away as she concluded, and the raised arm sank by her side. “A dark web has been woven!—there was fraud in the warp, and wrong in the woof! Wrong!—foul wrong! and blood may flow ere the web be unravelled;—but it shall be unravelled, though that blood should be mine, or dearer than mine!”

Away, away !—I will be weak no more,” sinking back in her chair with a shudder, her eyes glaring as though she had seen some fearful sight.

“ I know not why you called us hither ; but if only to listen to dark denunciations, it would have been better had I come alone,” remarked Edward Elton, seeing Mabel’s dread. “ If you have been wronged, tell me at some other time, and I will right you, if in my power.”

“ If I have been wronged !” she exclaimed, with startling vehemence : — “ If I have been wronged ! And have I not ?—You right me ! What can that arm do ?—did I ask its aid ? Whilst Martha Wilford lives, she can right herself ! Yet you meant it kindly, and I thank you,” she added in a softer tone. “ Fear me not, Mabel Conyers ; I loved your mother—I will seek your good ; but I would not that you became an heiress by your brother’s death !”

“ Heaven forbid !” exclaimed Mabel, fervently.

“ You are a good child !” said the black dame, in a tone of endearment that sounded

strangely from her lips. "I will tell your fortune: there are who say that I know all things,"—and rising abruptly, she took from a cupboard some singularly-marked cards.

"But, stay; it must not be said that Martha Wilford is inhospitable;—you shall eat and drink under my roof. Mabel Conyers and Edward Elton—her daughter and his son; and that they should meet beneath the roof of Martha Wilford!—that she should hold the balance of their fate! Strange!—yet stranger things may come to pass! Eat—drink!" and she placed plain cake and currant wine before them. "Pledge me!—'May the house of Conyers never be without male heir!'"

She marked her guests as they repeated her words, and was satisfied.

"We thank you, and wish you good morning," said Edward, seeing that his hostess was arranging her cards, and that Mabel by no means liked the proceeding.

"Stay!" exclaimed the woman, in a commanding tone, without looking up; "I will read your fates!"

“ Thank you ; but we are contented to act them.”

“ It is false ! you object not to the reading, only to the reader ; and but for the maiden, you would linger to hear of that portrait. For your own sakes, I bid you remain ; I can work my own will without heeding your good. Draw !” she said to Mabel, advancing towards her with the sorted cards.

Mabel mechanically obeyed, acting under the influence of that wild dark eye, till she had chosen nine, which her hostess arranged on the table, and then bade her, in the same commanding tone, draw near and listen to her fate.

“ Mark my words !—mine are not the flattering tales of the bribed soothsayer ! Look ! there are few marks here for your childhood, for it was scanty in events. That dark line is your aunt’s death ; she liked me not, and I liked her not, for I could not rule her. She judged me as she saw men—either as gently nor as harshly as she might ; but I would give this right hand, and that too,” (extending both,)

“to have her thoughts on my dying bed—to trust as she trusted :—but it cannot be.”

She paused a moment, and then resumed.

“Now come cross marks and tangled lines. You will love, and the long summer day be but as an hour in his presence—the young, the frank, and the light-hearted !—but this will not last. Fraud will cross your path—deceit will twine around you ; a ruder lover will propose, favoured by one who can command ! You will seek advice from the deceiver :—take care that he tangle you not in his toils, with his fair words, whilst he whom you love is afar ! See ! here is a large space, wherein are many figures indistinctly marked—signs of trouble and crossing plans ;—beyond two courses—one fair, and straight, and happy—the other, dark and crooked. It means, that the tracing of your fate is in your own hands. Your mother loved one, but wedded another : she yielded to threats and entreaties, and died of a broken heart ! Let Mabel Conyers look to it, that she tread not the same path ! that she suffer not the same doom ! Let her believe no evil report,

yield to no threat, bend to no pleading. Let her not waver! — let her not doubt! — and the summer day of love, though clouds may mar its glory for a while, shall neither end in sorrow nor in death! Be warned! your doom is read!” and, shuffling the selected cards with the others, she turned from the trembling Mabel, and held the pack to Edward, bidding him draw.

“Why not advise without this mummary? I doubt not your wisdom; and the pretended reading of unmeaning marks will not increase its value in my eyes.”

“Draw!” she repeated with a haughty gesture: “or I read not your fate.”

He drew—and, as he felt her keen gaze fascinating him to the choice she desired, his heart beat less regularly.

That she was sincere in her belief that what she said would come to pass, he could not doubt, and it was to this sincerity that she owed her influence; but that she won wisdom from the cards, he did not credit, though whence her knowledge came, he could not

guess. The cards were again chosen, the same mystic number—nine, and arranged as before.

For some moments she bent over them, as though the uncouth marks, (unintelligible to others,) had for her a secret meaning; then pointing to them with her long thin finger, and alternately glancing from them to Edward, she began to tell his fortunes, past and to come; her tone every moment becoming more elevated, and her eyes gleaming with wilder light, whilst the listener held his breath to catch every tone of the awful being before him; who looked like some inspired Pythoness of old.

“There is joy, and rejoicing! an heir is born! one of a proud line—the mother smiles in love—the father glows with pride. There is wealth and grandeur round him: the cares of many, and the love of two, who love him with that love which doth not die—with the same love wherewith they have loved each other. Joy lingers not—it has wings, and flies away. Riches abide not with the careless

and the wasteful, who give to each and all, content, as interest, to receive the shouts and flatteries of the crowd. The rich man has become poor—the spendthrift is a beggar; the loving husband flies the loving wife; the friend shuns the friend—misjudging, he yields to the guidance of a deceiver. The babe, welcomed with shouts, cradled in splendour, hushed in a mother's arms, is branded with shame, rocked in a hut, stilled by a stranger, borne away at night as a felon's child. Dark and lonely are the days of childhood, yet the youth's spirit is not crushed; the young gay heart is buoyant still, pining to go forth into the field of life, unknowing of the thorns which he shall gather. He saves a stranger on the high road from hired murderers—he shall be repaid! the good rendered to another shall be returned unto himself.

“Age grows indolent, and would sit in the chimney-nook; youth is active and impatient, and would range the world. The father, deceived more and less than he believes, has learnt to hate; the youth, unwronged, loves

all. Both lack wisdom. The lonely father abides at home, the youth departs—he would seek his fortune in the crowded city; but he wanders from his road, he stands—where he dreams not of—before whom he does not know. A fair face—a pictured beauty stamps its image on his heart: he heeds not the tale he hears—let him not, it is false!

“He goes on his way, but is won to linger by friendly words; he watches by the sick bed, he lives on gentle smiles; he who would have rushed to the crowded city abides in the humble village; he who would win fortune is content to receive it at a maiden’s hands.”

The young man’s eyes flashed at the charge, and he made a movement of dissent: the speaker paused not, but her succeeding words proved that she understood him.

“He knows not as yet the value of wealth—how the high and the low bow to a golden idol; he thinks only of the heart’s priceless jewel—love! the love of the lovely, and the gentle, and the true. Let him take heed that he lose it not! that another wears not the

pearl he covets ! Let him not draw back for the lack of gold—gold shall be his in the time of need ! One bowed with sorrow more than years, has proffered friendship, let him claim it frankly—boldly ; it will not be withheld ; and the time is coming when he will require it. There are dangers in the young man's path : one is blind who he thinks sees and approves, let him pause ere he opens his eyes—ere he ask what may be denied. A rude rival may be balanced by increasing regard ; or withdraw his suit, for the pearl will not be set in gold, as some believe. But another rival comes ! sparkling as the dancing stream ! deep, dark as the stagnant pool ! Let the youth be wise—be wary : now comes the trial of his life. He trusts to kindly words, and open smiles—they may not mean what he imagines. Smiles may give place to frowns—regard change to suspicion—suspicion into wrath. The words of the wily may cause this. Let the youth be cautious—let him trust no stranger—let him hint not his wishes for awhile. If esteem should seem to cool, let him heed

it not; it shall grow warm again. Let him govern his temper as his acts, for he is quick of mood; let him linger on, still living on sunny smiles, which, if he be not rash, shall beam upon him for long years. As to the maiden, so to the youth—there are two paths before him. Will he choose as rashness shall impel him? Then will come parting from the maiden of his love—the triumph of deceit and wrong: woe to him! and woe to her! and woe to all. Will he choose as prudence shall advise?—will he hearken to the wise? Then shall a brilliant destiny be his. The deceiver thwarted; the maiden of his love his own—the arms of that pictured beauty clinging round him; a father's blessing and a father's smile; firm friends, a noble name, and the wealth which brings the homage of the lips, but, more, dries up the mourner's tears. Will the youth pause? Will he mar all by rashness? Will he not wait and bear awhile? His fate is in his own hands: let him decide.

The lines are read! the doom is said!
The issue rests on his head!"

She pushed the cards from before her.

“The words of knowledge have been spoken, woe to him who will not heed them. Tell not Philip Conyers what the black dame hath said. You hesitate!—say to him such is my wish: and add—let him come, and I will read his fate as I have read yours: my ban rests on all who repeat. Will he ask further, think you? Come not near me till I call you; neither young man nor maiden. Ponder on my words—and now begone! I would be alone; there is a trial coming on, and the heart must commune with itself, and learn to bear it. Justice and revenge demand the sacrifice; but love pauses still. Love! can love linger yet? Begone, I say! Why stay you here? Would you read the secret of the outraged heart, and mock its pangs? Begone! begone!” stamping in passion, whilst her arm waved them away.

“One question,” said Edward, recovering from the effect of her impassioned speech.

“That portrait, was it——”

“It was none connected with the name of

Elton," replied his hostess, with a mocking smile.

"Who then? And who is the stranger I should fear?"

"I will say no more. Begone! if you would not have me blight you with a curse—if you would still have me for a friend. I would be alone, for the spirits of the present and the past are coming round me, and none must see the conflict. Away! away! there is no peace for guilt!" again waving her arm for their departure.

"May we not soothe? There is peace for the sorrower for sin," said Mabel in a low sweet voice, though still clinging to Edward's arm for protection.

"You soothe!" exclaimed the haughty woman, with a fierceness which softened as she gazed on the gentle speaker. "No, no; not even Mabel Conyers can do that. There is no peace for the hardened sinner—for the haughty heart that will not bend. Go!" she continued with a gentleness, of which none believed her capable, taking Mabel's hand. "Go! may the

blessing of your God be on you both ; I dare not give you mine. Go ! go ! ” gently putting them out, and closing the door behind them.

As they glanced in at the casement in passing, they saw Martha Wilfred rocking to and fro in her arm-chair, as though the frame was stirred by the strong passions of the mind. They passed out of the garden in silence, and up to the house, each heart busy with its own thoughts ; and Edward’s whispered, “ Fear not ; I will protect you ! ” as the still trembling Mabel relinquished his arm, to which she had clung till they reached the hall, was the only speech between them.

The black dame was a good judge of character. The squire asked no questions on hearing her message, and the laugh with which he declined consulting the oracle was not as joyous as usual.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

LONDON : PRINTED BY SAMUEL BENTLEY,
Dorset Street, Fleet Street.

THE SQUIRE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“THE HEIRESS,” “THE MERCHANT’S DAUGHTER,” &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1837.

THE SQUIRE.

CHAPTER I.

RAIN will come even in June ; and it came the next morning so heavy and continued, that walking or riding was beyond a doubt : so the squire and Edward, not much to the taste of the latter, went to the kennel, and next to the stable, where the young man left his host in the middle of a history to old Ned, of a famous run with a fine burst of forty minutes, and retraced his way to the drawing-room. Here he found Mabel at her spinnet, who, with the vanity of simple woman, believed his assertion that he would rather look at her than at the finest steed in Europe, and Arabia to boot,—rather listen to her sweet notes than to the cry of the

creature woman is ! She hath little
her love ; she cannot doubt, for de
worse than death.

They sang together an “ auld war
and Edward was looking into the fa
the singer, when the falling of a bool
him to turn, he met the eyes of a
fixed keenly on him, with an expr
startling, so mingled, so compounded
feelings, that to tell the one predomi
beyond his power. The startling e
vanished on the instant, and never met
again.

“ Well sung ! ” exclaimed the squire.
were so intent that you did not hear
and Mabel did not know she had so r
teners, or she would not have sung
Look, child ! here is your favourite D

“Quite ready,” said Mr. Durnsford, taking both Mabel’s hands, which she yielded him frankly, scarcely even blushing when he raised them to his lips with a gallant expression of his pleasure at their meeting after so long an absence.

“There, Durnsford, that is enough; you will make Mabel vain—she has not heard such pretty things since your departure,” remarked the laughing squire. “I shall really begin to think you as young as you profess to be, though I have known you these ——”

“Hush! hush! Philip Conyers,” interposed his guest with graceful gaiety. “What barbarous manners you have in this antediluvian village! To think of telling a gallant man of his age, and that too in the presence of the young lady whom he is resolved to bear away from all competitors! I have made the elixir of life a reality, which the world has so long considered an insane fancy: I am the age that Miss Conyers likes best, and shall never be older.”

“I believe not,” replied the squire, highly

as a son to me, and as a son I regard you. You must be friends."

"I am Mr. Elton's friend already, and I permit me to say so. His attentions to me and Conyers make me his for life," replied Durnsford, holding out his hand.

"This is as it should be," remarked the delighted squire. "If my boy were but a year older, I should desire nothing more; but he is not long yet," and his smile saddened to a sigh.

"All in good time," observed Mr. Durnsford with cheering kindness. "Boys will be boys, and linger by the way. Wait patiently, I have no doubt, when you do meet, that they will show cause for the delay. Make allowance for his having been a little spoilt; you have preached in vain on that point. But he

“Reject him at once, Mabel,” said the squire, forgetting his anxiety in his friend’s lively remarks.

“Your gentle daughter will not drive me to despair : besides, I will take no refusal. I intend to fit up a room expressly for her at Newton Marsh, with books, and music, and birds, and flowers, and no dogs—and mine she shall be.”

The rest of the day passed in lively talk. The squire, yielding to his guest’s humour, drank a little more than he had ventured on since his accident ; his smile and his jest were ever ready in sympathy with the gaiety of Durnsford ; and he dropped asleep with the full conviction that he had never spent a happier evening.

“That is just what I wished to see,” he said to himself the following morning, when, on looking from the window, he saw his old and his young friend walking together on the lawn. “I was sure they would agree ; and Durnsford met him so cordially ! It is a good and a kind youth ; I wish Philip may be like him.” Durns-

makes him headstrong.”

“ Well, what do you think of Edward quired the squire of his friend as the little behind Mabel and young Elton the day.

“ A little impetuous ;—and perhaps a high opinion of his own talents. But excuse these trifling blemishes in one so and with so many good qualities. I commend of presumption—almost all young have it—that is, the bold and active. Their opinion of their own powers appears to lead to their very daring—it gives them promptness and decision ; and we greybeards must make allowances for youthful vanity, and with something like a lecture on their still notions of old age.”

youthful vanity in Edward Elton—he never tried to lecture me.”

“Lecture you, my dear Conyers! No! no! he was not likely to do that:—you, to whom he owes so very much; taking him into your house, lending him your hunters, and treating him as an old and valued friend, though too poor to own even a pony. Others would have been afraid lest the young man should turn out a highwayman, or a barber’s son, or the like; but my kind friend Philip Conyers never suspected any one in his life—nor will, till he has been taken in. Then that splendid present of Fury should ensure his eternal gratitude. Why, it is a superb animal! worth four hundred;—and how well he rides it! Perhaps lecture was too strong a term; and I might not have understood him when he spoke of the prejudices of our forefathers, while you and I talk only of their wisdom. But the young are always for reform; it strikes in with their vanity to think that that which is old requires mending,—houses, customs, manners—ay, even men: but we can bear with this. Of course,

he is not a milksop or a niggard, or you would not like him ; otherwise, I half suspect I should think him scanty with the wine-cup. Perhaps he cannot bear much, being unaccustomed to any."

"I dare say he could," replied the squire a little warmly, yet not meeting his friend's look ; "but he makes it a point of morality."

"Oh, a puritan ! Too fine a fellow to be that. We must laugh him out of his fancies, and make him one of us."

"I don't know about that," observed the squire rather gravely, but in some embarrassment. "He brought good arguments, and out of the Bible too. Indeed, I am beginning to think it would be as well if some of us did not drink quite as much. As he says, 'What is the use of reason if——'"

"Oh ! then I was right ; and he does lecture even you," interrupted the laughing Durnsford. "I hope he has not quite lectured you into becoming a puritan. Remember, the puritans overturned church and state—murdered the king—and made an arch hypocrite, the son

of a brewer, protector ! Oh, Philip Conyers ! I thought you had been a loyal man—staunch to church and king. I shall be off, lest he should lecture me too into rebellion and puritanism.”

“ I am no puritan ; I am for church and king. Who says otherwise ? ” shouted the squire with a sudden burst of wrath.

“ Not Richard Durnsford : I was but in jest. You would neither overturn the state, nor stint a friend ; so we may still drink a glass together without rebuke.”

“ I am no drunkard,” remarked the squire doggedly.

“ Who could make such a charge ? I spoke but in merriment. Though the young man did say that some of the customs of our forefathers were wicked and barbarous, he could not mean that we were to taste no wine, and forget our hospitality. A favourite of yours could mean no such thing ; or if he did, of course he could not rule you to the same saving opinion : it might be a plausible excuse for him who has nothing.—How admirably he

improved so much under his instruction she will mount almost any horse him by her side. And how well the habit become her!" added the provost catching a glimpse of her lovely face turned with unusual animation to his companion.

"She is indeed a lovely creature: are a happy fellow, Conyers, to have a daughter. I suppose I must divide with the young man: I can afford him a little. How beautifully, I think Miss Conyers behaves to him!—with gentle consideration lest he should be slighted,—for those of doubtful status are sometimes touchy,—and yet restraining him from presumption. There
few so young as he is, I think

but she will never forget that she is a Conyers in the bestowing of her love. What were you beginning to tell me about a thunder-storm ?”

The squire told the story, but not with his usual clearness, for he was a little bewildered by the late conversation, and showed symptoms of being uneasy and fidgety.

“What a providential escape! It makes one shudder to think what might have been her fate. One so young! so gentle! and so lovely! It is fearful to imagine that she might have been lost to us in the splendour of her loveliness. What do not all her friends owe to that young man for his promptness and decision! I told you I was sure he was possessed of both, though based it may be on a little youthful presumption:—but I shall never think of that again; he may lecture me, or my forefathers either, for the future, and he please—nay, stint me in my wine too without a murmur. There are some, in his situation, who might have hesitated to take the daughter of Philip Conyers in his arms, even to preserve her

resentment at the liberty. I env
opportunity of saving her — all m
the storm so very sudden? I sl
thought that, if not absorbed in a
liarly interesting occupation, he m
foreseen the coming danger. I can u
no one but a lover playing the pleas
lady-love being so blind.”

“ Edward was not playing the pl
his lady-love, but riding quietly by
side ; and the fault was mine. I t
that there would be no storm for ho
it did come on very suddenly at last,
the honest squire.

“ Oh, Philip ! — just like you ! — r
see a cloud or foresee a storm ! I v
lieve that one might run off with tl
Mabel L .”

you neither see those signs, nor could understand them if you did."

"I see more than people think," replied the squire rather pettishly; for he piqued himself on that in which he was most deficient, and could never bear a suspicion of his penetration.

"Do you? I doubt it!" said his friend with an incredulous shake of the head. "Well for you that Richard Durnsford is going to settle near you! Good and honourable yourself, you never think it possible that others are not the same, and never suspected anybody in your life higher than a poacher or a gipsy.—Thunder-storms are not pleasant things. I am vexed at the death of that beautiful mare—I was so convinced that it would suit your daughter. If the young man had not been so absent or absorbed, (for I can scarcely think him stupid,) and sought shelter a few minutes sooner, she would have been saved; but the great loss is yours, so I must not grumble, and fifty guineas is nothing to you: besides, your daughter was saved, though at the last moment

and at the expense of a tolerable fright. I wonder she ever mounted again."

"I feared that, and doubt if any one except Edward could have persuaded her: but he walked by her side for some days; and she knows that he has always an eye upon her horse, and is ready to assist her should she require his aid."

"A gallant youth, upon my word! He rules all I see; and I must look to my old footing in the family. At Astell Court, I think you said, they sheltered;—was its owner at home?"

"Yes, at the window—saw the accident, and came out immediately, insisting on their entering the house and making use of his carriage."

"Indeed! Well, I am glad of that: enmities should die away with years,—man is mortal, and hate should be the same. He must have felt a little awkward, those who injure being usually the last to forgive. But perhaps he thought it some little reparation for the ungracious things he said of you soon after your marriage;—or perhaps he fears that you

may try to open another right of way ; they say there is one which might be tried. It must have annoyed you, your daughter's being obliged to him for shelter. A pity but that, foreseeing the storm, Mr. Elton had induced her to ride faster ; she might then have reached the farm-house on the other side of the park : not that you need trouble about it, being the injured party. Did he mention you, or refer to the past ?”

“ He sent a civil message, with a request that Mabel would sometimes call upon him.”

“ With an apology, of course, for his former conduct.—I am glad that he sees it at last in its true light : better late than never. You accepted the apology, I suppose, and let your daughter go there once for form's sake ?”

“ He sent no apology ; and I have been thinking lately, whether I might not have been something to blame. One sees things differently on a sick-bed, with death in view, to what one does in the hunting-field, with health and strength in every limb.”

“ Yes, yes :—one has the blue-devils hovering round one, pinching here and twitching

grinning demon to the lower region out in the field again with a spade beneath one—the cry of the hound, the blithe bugle sounding in one's ears, and the devils depart, knowing their rule is of no avail to those who can stand up and say that he is an Englishman if Philip Conyers cannot? Who can bring a charge against the Squire of Ranford for oppressing the poor? Does he drive every peasant far away without a meal? Does he shut his doors against his friends? Does he stir up the spirit of sedition and democracy? Does he neglect the ancient institutions of his country? Does he do what they were in the times of his fathers? Does he despise the brawlers who see faults where his ancestors saw only perfection? Did he not turn down his glass at the toast of 'Old England'?

heart—a freer hand?—No, no, Philip Conyers, cast away these idle fancies, the phantoms of a sick-room; they are not fit for a man in health. I would that I could give as good an account of myself; and there are many others who wish the same.—You vindictive!—you were never vindictive in your life—too forgiving by half.”

“Our best deeds are imperfect,” began the squire, perplexed, embarrassed, yet gratified by his friend’s glowing eulogium, though lately awakened thought made him doubt the soundness of his views.

Richard Durnsford knew the great advantage which his quickness gave him over his slower friend. Like a squirrel confusing the sight by the celerity of his change of position, glancing from subject to subject, he confounded the judgment: yet was this glancing so gay, so brilliant, as to pass not from the mind as only idle words;—he seldom failed to leave those impressions—to induce those feelings, which he desired. The heart pondered on his words long after the sounds had died away; and the

mind dwelt on images it had had little share in forming, though never doubting that its own powers had originated them.

“ Yes ; our best deeds are imperfect, as you say,” interrupting the squire : “ but give me your good works, and I will take my chance. God knows that we are all poor imperfect creatures, and pardons our imperfections. You are not afflicted with puritanism, or I should be off, holding the disease infectious. Better have the scarlet fever or the smallpox. But you are not to be led away by new-fangled notions : you do as your fathers did before you. And where can you show better men than they were ? Well if we turn out half as good, with our French notions, and fashions, and weak, washy wines, and what not. For my part, I am content to do as they did before I was born. I see how it is : you have been kept low since your fall, and are horribly hipped. Some good gallops, and a few visits to the old friends you have known from your boyhood, with a social evening or two, will set you to rights again. By the bye, your friends say

you would not let them in when they called; and that they understand you mean to give up hunting, keep no wine in your cellar, and build a methodist chapel. I was vexed at the reports, though knowing their folly, and asked how any one could suppose such things of Philip Conyers? You may well laugh. I wonder who set the report about: it appeared to come from one who knew something of your family, for they mentioned Mr. Elton, and said that you had been getting low and fanciful almost from the time of his coming into the house. I positively denied that so young a man—a mere boy—could have any influence over you, and laid the blame on Horton, for keeping you low. Now that you can appear among your friends again, you will soon prove the falsehood of the report. You shall go with me to-morrow to see Barrett. Some of the hounds have the distemper, some of the servants the scarlet fever, so he has removed to Tillwell Farm, whilst house and kennel are purifying and painting. That is but three miles off, or less, I think, by the footway. I am glad of it; in

my opinion, there is scarcely a grander sight than a fine pack of hounds—and his are capital. I shall be over there often ; and I wish you would go too, and occasionally give him some hints for their management : he would attend to you, and the whole hunt would have cause to thank you.—Did Astell refer to the past, and his reported wish to supplant you with your wife when Miss Duncombe? ”

“ He owned to Mabel that he had once loved her mother, and that he loved her now for her mother’s sake.”

“ Did you say that she had been there since? ”

“ She went once, but did not see him, as he had gone to town the day before on important business.”

“ What did your daughter and Mr. Elton think of him? Does he appear much altered from their account? ”

“ They were amazingly taken with him : and the favourable impression was mutual, I conclude, for he desired Edward, should he require the assistance of a friend, to call boldly upon him. He seemed much struck with the

young man's likeness to some old friend, and took to him on that account :—he strikes me sometimes as resembling one known and regarded in my younger days, for he never appeared a stranger to me ; but I suppose it must be fancy, for I cannot make out who he is like."

" I don't know that—I will look at him particularly," remarked Mr. Durnsford ;—exclaiming, after a few minutes' observation, " I have found the likeness,—Hather!—you remember him ? "

" What ! the smooth-tongued fellow, who talked so well, and cheated all who had any dealing with him, even his own father ? No, no, Durnsford, there is no likeness between him and Edward Elton in any way."

" Well, I may be mistaken ; but it seems to me there is, —not exactly now, when he is animated and doing his best to be agreeable, but sometimes when his features are in repose, as the painters say—not lit up with the transitory expression of the moment, but wearing their usual character. You remember being taken in by

honest Hather, as he was called, and so do not like to think it. Look at him keenly some time, when he is not trying to please, and then you will admit the resemblance; unless you have forgotten the rogue's features, which is possible, as you never remember a face. You have a shocking memory on such points: I should not be surprised if you were to forget Martha Wilford's physiognomy, singular as it is, should she absent herself from your presence for one short year. How is the black dame, as the urchins call her? She was a fine girl once. How does she wear? I did not see her when last at the Grange."

"Very badly,—looking as though she had lived years during the last few months."

"Does she visit the Grange now?"

"No; she has taken an oath not to sit down beneath its roof till Philip's return, appearing to hold me accountable for all his acts."

"Do you visit her, then, that you can give an account of her looks?"

"Not I indeed!—though she sent word by the young people, that if I would go, she

would tell my fortune, as she had done theirs. But this was no inducement; for Mabel was not herself all the evening; and even Edward looked strange, and only spoke when spoken to."

"Ha! ha! ha! It served them right for going: she is not a woman to be mocked, and I suppose she told them some horrible doom. What did she predict?"

"I know nothing about it; for she sent her commands to me not to inquire on pain of her wrath, and I never took the trouble to ask further."

"She fairly frightened them, I suppose; and they never again ventured near her unasked."

"They did not go then unasked. She met me in the lane, and bade me send Mabel and Edward to her cottage: you know how she issues her commands."

"So she invited, or commanded their presence—and for the purpose of telling their fortunes too!—Unheard-of courtesy! I shall be jealous, having been the older acquaintance.

The fair Mabel I might account for; but young Elton—a perfect stranger—that is extraordinary, considering her usual habits.”

“He saved her cat from the dogs, or some such thing.”

“So Martha Wilford was grateful for the saving a cat! But how came she, then, to predict so sad a fate as to disturb the youth’s equanimity? One would have thought that she might have shown a friendly feeling for once, and predicted a golden destiny.”

“He considered that she did entertain a friendly feeling towards him, and said his fortune was rather strange than evil.”

“A friend of Martha Wilford’s, is he? that is an honour no honest man would envy him. Has he seen her frequently since?”

“This was but a day or two ago, and I doubt if he has any wish to see her again.”

“There then, at least, we are agreed. But here am I, talking over old friends and bygone times with you, forgetting your lovely daughter may think me remiss: I must do my best to make amends.”

The next minute he was beside Mabel, exerting all his powers to amuse her, maintaining such a lively and unslackening conversation, till they returned to the house, that Edward had little opportunity of speaking, had he been so little entertained as to desire it. So well did he succeed in interesting both, that the silence of the squire passed unnoticed, as well as his annoyance and embarrassment.

“Is the world changed since my father’s youthful days?” thought Edward Elton as he dressed for dinner. “The unceasing burden of his tale was deceit and wrong,—the coldness of the many—the falsehood of the few—the contempt of all for poverty—the impossibility of winning even the semblance of regard without the aid of wealth or title. I have neither; yet I have seen not the semblance merely, but the reality. I have encountered neither coldness nor deceit. Do not some see as through a darkened glass, robbing life of its beauty by their own gloomy anticipations, and clouding the sun that would else shine brightly on them? Mr. Conyers, does he not feel for me

her not to waver? Did she not sit
on my arm when that woman's words
were of my feelings? Yes, I must
give those feelings
my love,—not give those feelings
tell my wishes to her father,—so
warned; and if she know but half
the future as she told me of the
trust her words. I would it had
been wise; but, for a few days, she shall
I hate concealment; and if I tell no
words to the father, I tell it not to
her: and for my manner, it shall be
in his presence or his absence. He must
if not, he may. She spoke of sorrow
would seek my harm—of coldness
host. I fear no stranger, and not
There are, who count a breeze a harm
summer clouds that pass and pass.

Thus thought Edward Elton ; and he descended to the drawing-room with a light step and a lighter heart.

Mr. Durnsford's wit and vivacity were so fascinating, that the gentlemen lingered in the dining-room long after Mabel had left it ; and the wine went freely round—more freely than Edward wished, though the faculties of neither were obscured. The young man would have left the table before, but Mr. Conyers forbade it rather pettishly. Mabel waited long for her evening walk, and did not find it as pleasant as usual. Mr. Durnsford was lively and amusing as ever : but she did not find the walk agreeable ;—why, she either did not ask herself, or did not answer.

Edward was of the same opinion, and perhaps pursued the same plan, of not asking or not answering ; and Mr. Conyers would have agreed with them, had notes been compared. If Mr. Durnsford found it pleasant, as he appeared to do, he must either not have seen the discomfort of the others, though a babe might have guessed it, or he must have found plea-

path was not sufficiently broad to admit more than two to walk abreast. Mr. Durn kept in the advance with Mabel; and her answers and observations were not always appropriate to the questions. In her observations of her animated companion he appeared not to remark it. Edward was behind with the squire, who, strange to say, was restless and out of humour; detesting the young man beside him, though neither could he entertain nor be entertained; and was continually giving him a flat contradiction, or taking a point of disagreeing with him, as if he had, and would have, no opinion of his own.

I hate dulness or ill humour in others; so will, with the reader's permission,

knowing why—no removing grievances that the tongue is ashamed to tell. To-morrow's sun may rise in glory and dispel all mists; if not, let us to our pouting rooms, venting our ill humour on ourselves alone.

CHAPTER II.

THE rose-coloured hues of life had somewhat faded in Edward's mind before he sank to sleep. At dinner he had imagined none of those crosses to his views which the dark dame had predicted ; at tea he was less exulting, and began to think it possible that storm-clouds might arise on his fair horizon. If he thought so then, still more did he think so when, in little more than a fortnight, without being able to fix on any act of his as the cause, or on any precise time as the period from which the change had commenced, he found that his position in the squire's family was no longer what it had been. His pleasure was no longer so kindly or so eagerly consulted ; his society was no longer so much delighted in, though assiduously sought, or rather required ; and his opinion was no longer solicited, or no longer heeded. His wishes no longer ruled the squire,

who, though still the hospitable host, and at times showing his former regard, was evidently capricious in his favour, and still more evidently ill at ease with himself or with those around him. His little ebullitions of temper became every day more frequent; even Mabel suffered occasionally, and Mr. Durnsford did not always escape; whilst Edward was often pained by pettish remarks on the presumption of youth, in despising the wisdom of the aged, and the customs of their fathers, and expecting to rule their elders.

Naturally of a good temper, and really attached to Mr. Conyers, Edward submitted to these remarks in patient silence, or turned them off by a gay yet respectful reply, though he could not but feel hurt by their frequent recurrence.

The domestics began to take their cue from their master, and, urged by Dawkins, who had never forgiven his interference with Fury, or to screen their own delinquencies, hinted that he was inclined to lord it over them, giving at times orders contrary to those issued by Mr.

temper far more than was
but the squire of that day was not the
of three weeks before.

Annoyed by the reports mentioned by
ford, Mr. Conyers, to prove that he was
niggard nor methodist, began on the
ing day a round of visits to his hunting
attributing their apparent neglect to the
that their presence would not be acceptable
to silence those same reports, every invita-
to dinner was readily accepted, and various
quets given in return, at both of which
child and his young friend beheld with
regret that the habits of his former days
regaining their ascendancy, and the bette-
ings of the sick-room fading away. The
in which most of his companions indulge
listened to as words of course: and the

That the squire by no means felt satisfied with himself whilst yielding to the influence of former habits and riotous companions, was evident from his shrinking from the look of Edward and his child when the effects of his excess had passed : but the good resolutions sometimes formed were too often swept away by persuasion or ridicule.

Brought up in frugality, and with a horror of intemperance, of which his father had too often witnessed the fatal results to mind and body, Edward was shocked and disgusted at many of the scenes of which he was compelled to become a spectator. He would have declined these parties, so little in accordance with his tastes and principles ; but Mr. Conyers was peremptory in insisting on his accompanying himself and Durnsford ; and after claiming as a right to decline wine when he pleased, he thought it better to comply, in the hope of regaining his influence over the squire, and, after a while, turning him away from habits so hurtful to himself in body and in soul. The right was admitted, but a smile passed between

Mr. Durnsford and his host, thinking how rarely that right would be exercised in opposition to sneers, abuse, and ridicule. They were deceived : Edward Elton was not to be turned by either, when his own heart, as in the present case, did not join with the tempters ; and the quiet and conciliating manner in which he declined a participation in their excess often saved him from sneers, and compelled respect, though his firmness won him little liking, and less love : in fact, he was only tolerated by many as the guest of the kind-hearted and hospitable Philip Conyers. This he saw ; and though it made no change in his conduct, it ruffled his temper and galled his spirit ; the more when he saw himself declining day by day in the favour of his still usually kind host, who felt his conduct a rebuke to himself, and sometimes joined in the ridicule of his over-sobriety, as most considered it.

Happily for him, save Mr. Durnsford, there was neither sufficient wit nor talent among the squire's friends to gild excess, or gloss over sin : he saw the drunkard in his natural deformity,

and was firm against what he most dreaded—the fear of offending Mabel's father, though Durnsford urged him to be a little less scrupulous on that very plea.

“ I admire your principles, Mr. Elton—still more your firmness, considering your youth ; but, by a little indulgence, you might acquire greater influence, and thus effect some good, particularly to my friend Conyers : whereas I fear you are sinking in his regard. Come, yield for once to a little friendly advice ! What is a glass more or less ?—your head could stand it, as mine does : I always know what I am about. The squire would hold you in much higher favour ; and, by pleasing him in this, you might hereafter gain him to your wishes. You are too prudent not to see the necessity of sometimes bending if you would rise, and the wisdom of acquiescing—nay, joining people in their little foibles. Humour folks in their ways, and they will let you take yours. What if they do go wrong ?—it is nothing to you—you are not called on to set them right.”

stoop to falsify my principles, or countenance what my heart condemns, to maintain my regard or accomplish my wishes. My heart and my views are open to all : if I succeed, it will be by honourable means—not by bending, or stooping to flatter wrong by a dishonest deed.”

“As you please ; I only sought your opinion,” said Mr. Durnsford, shrugging his shoulders.
“I see my mistake now. As you allow Conyers to be cheated by his servants without opening his eyes, and do not exert the influence you possess to lead him to your own satisfaction, I thought you had seen the policy of silence, and kept your own head clear to profit afterwards by the confusion of his intellects.”

“The policy of silence, Mr. Durnsford,”

when hopeless of effecting good, and encouraging error by joining in it, or keeping silence from interest when required by regard to speak. I have more than once mentioned the dishonesty of his servants to Mr. Conyers."

"I was not aware of that, but rather understood that he considered them honest because you had seen nothing to the contrary. His opinion of your judgment is so high, that you have but to speak out plainly, and he yields at once."

"I do not find Mr. Conyers so yielding, and believe that your influence is paramount to mine," replied the young man coldly, turning away without perceiving the approach of the squire.

"What was Edward saying?" he inquired.

"Only regretting that he could not influence you more; being a little jealous, I believe, of your regard for me."

"Influence me in what?" asked the squire quickly.

"The old story!—to be as over-scrupulous as himself. The young always think they have

discovered the exact rule of right. I admire his firmness, and hope it will not degenerate into obstinacy, to which, I fear, it is fast approaching. You should speak to him on the subject; though I doubt if he would receive the advice in good part. He is a fine young man, in spite of his self-opinion; though I think it would be better if he gave way a little on some points. But it must be flattering—in fact, intoxicating, to one who has seen so little of the world, and holds no high station in it, to appear thus to rebuke, and be superior to, those older and wiser than himself.”

“Better if he learnt a little humility, instead of reproving and wishing to rule his elders,” observed the squire testily. “Yet his manner to me has ever been affectionate and respectful as that of a son,” he added reluctantly.

“He may have reasons for that; he is no fool.”

“What reasons?” inquired Mr. Conyers sharply. “Edward Elton is no time-server, though he may be a little too stiff; and, perhaps, it would be as well if I and others

thought seriously on many things—more as he wishes that I should think.”

“ I leave all to judge for themselves :—a cup of wine and a merry song may be deadly sins, though our fathers did not think so ; but I am not inclined to play niggard or puritan,” replied Mr. Durnsford, with a slight curling of the lip that made his old friend turn away with a troubled look.

The plain good sense of Mr. Conyers, warped by his blind devotion to the habits and opinions of his ancestors, however erring, did not fit him to cope in argument with Mr. Durnsford, or to strip a question of the extraneous matter with which his liveliness clothed it, bewildering those of slower perceptions, till the bare question of right and wrong was wreathed and smothered with bright fancies, or the judgment fettered in the bonds of prejudice. Ill at ease with himself ; his mind, the arena for contending feelings ; shrinking from ridicule, though professing to despise it ; and ruled by an appeal to his prejudices, whilst believing he had none ;—the squire’s

manner was variable and uncertain, according to the society in which he chanced to be at the moment. Yielding to the fear inspired by those bugbear words, niggard and puritan, and honouring the customs of his fathers, he hastened to defend himself from the charge of seeing sin in the wine-cup or the song, with a confusion of ideas which rendered it difficult to gather a meaning from his bewildered speech.

“ You need not make a defence, as if I had charged you with being a milksop or a miser ; who that knows Philip Conyers would believe the tale ? ” said Durnsford, interrupting him, with a friendly smile. “ As for the real habitual drunkard, you and I have as great a detestation of the man as young Elton himself ; though we may not indulge in such high-flown speeches. I am particular in employing sober tradesmen,—and so are you, I know,—and will not permit a public-house in Ranford : but it is rather different, a party of gentlemen meeting together after a hard day’s sport, and making a little merry ; they can afford it—they have no business that can be hindered—and it—

jure no one by being a little excited. There cannot be much harm in that—not even if they should require a little aid to get up stairs. One cannot be always playing the wise man; the mind needs relaxation.”

“To be sure,” said the squire, trying to feel assured of the truth of that to which he assented.

“Now, Mr. Elton will not agree to this self-evident fact, and makes allowances for no one; so Barrett and some others talk of having a set-to at him to-night, though I warned them that they had better not; for I suspect the youth can be violent, and declined having any hand in it. And now, Philip, before I go to dress, when will you and the lovely Mabel honour me with your company at Newton Marsh? Miss Marsden will be able to meet you there in a few days, her cousin being so much better; and you and your daughter liked her, I think. I was much obliged to you for asking her here the last fortnight; it was so kind of you, because she was my hundred and fiftieth cousin, and was so afraid of

“ I am always glad to oblige such a friend as you, Durnsford, and she thanks you for proposing it as you did. I would have felt lonely else when we are apart, and, I don't know how it is, but we are out a great deal lately,—or perhaps from the contrast. She was a pleasant though no longer young.”

“ Do not deny the kindness of having her here, for the proposition was yours, though I readily and thankfully accepted the offer. But when do you honour your cottage with your presence?”

“ You shall settle that with Mabel Ward.”

“ With Mr. Elton? I understood he said his visit had been so long. he

if with you then, I shall be very happy to receive him as your friend,—that is, if he will put up with a bed at a farm-house near, for I have none to offer him under my own roof. I will try and have it comfortable ; for though I dare say he has slept a hundred times in a garret, or worse, I think it possible that he may be a little touchy on the point : those of no station are always more sensitive than those of assured footing in society. Since you leave it to me and your daughter, I shall take care and name an early day.”

“ With all my heart.”

“ When do you pay your legacy into Tremlett’s bank ? I want you to settle a little business for me there.”

“ I have not received the legacy yet.”

“ I know that ; but you go to Wexton the day after to-morrow to receive it from Mr. Stanton,—do you not ?”

“ So he writes me word.”

“ A thousand pounds from a man who only saw you once ! just because your name was the same as his ! It is a thousand, is it not ?”

fire or robbers, besides jewels and England notes ; for he never would go to a country bank. The exact value of the treasure is not known."

"Truly you are a fortunate man, as well for Tremlett that you have no dread of country banks, though several have failed lately ; and there were strange stories of Tremlett himself a little time ago."

"Who told you that I had no dread of country banks ? I once lost some hundred pounds and my uncle some thousands—so I have no more of them now : besides, young Tremlett has run away too much to please me. No, let me get guineas or Bank of England notes into my hands, and I engage that no banker shall have a sight of them."

- - - - -

ber Hinton? Every one supposed him rolling in riches; and he was cried up as the most honourable of men. 'I would as soon trust him as the Bank of England itself,' said one. 'I think he is safer still,' cried another. No one thought he could fail; so, fool that I was! I placed my money in his hands. He broke within three weeks; and after ten years the last dividend was paid, and I was poorer by two hundred pounds!—I have seldom much money in my possession to care about; only what I have, I keep in my own charge. But I did not know that you disliked country banks as much as I do; and yours is rather a large sum to keep in the house. You will be robbed and murdered, as the gipsy once predicted."

"Yes, and tried to bring it to pass, too, I believe," replied the squire with a careless laugh.

"I advise you seriously to take care, however you may be inclined to laugh. You do not mind being called coward by all the jesters in the county, though they doubled the present number."

“ I am not afraid ! Philip Conyers is no coward to shake at a whistle or whimper at a pistol, and look into rats’ holes and drawers lest a thief should be there. He is not afraid to meet any one man—nor, for the matter of that, any two either :—he is not so old but he could show them sport yet. There are not many who would venture to attack him—and certainly not his house, with all that set of lazy fellows about, who would fight were it only for the sake of their own dinners. Besides, I have a secret place which no one suspects : I will show it you one of these days. You know the old cabinet in my dressing-room ? The top lets down ; and inside are some rather ruinous-looking pigeon-holes, stuffed with odd papers, old bills, and other things as valuable : let them take them if they like. In the third hole on the right hand, at the back of a parcel of papers crammed carelessly in, is a secret drawer : this is my treasure-box ! No one only feeling would discover it ; but press a finger hard on each side of the division, about three inches from the bottom, and a drawer bursts out. There is no

one would find it, or think of looking there—at least, none of my lazy fellows; though I rather suspect some of them have seen the inside of the cabinet, for I seldom lock it, that they may not fancy that there is anything of value kept there.”

“Hush!” said Durnsford, advancing cautiously to look over a low wall near which they were conversing.

“What is the matter?” asked the squire.

“Nothing, I hope,” replied his friend in a low voice; “only I fancied that I heard a rustling as of some person stealing away, who might have overheard our conversation; but I suppose I must have been mistaken, for I can see no one.”

“And a listener could not have got away so quickly but you must have seen him,” remarked Mr. Conyers, quite convinced that he had not been overheard.

“You had better not mention the subject again,” observed Durnsford, “for there are gipsies about, who start up suddenly one knows not why or whence; but here, out in this open

space, there is no possibility of our being overheard. What does Stanton say is the amount of your legacy?"

"He does not know exactly; though it is supposed to be more than a thousand. The box is to be placed in my hands unopened."

"I hope, Conyers, that they will not set aside the will on the plea of insanity."

"My good friend was rather eccentric, certainly, to say the least."

"Not a little so, it appears. How do you manage about the dinner at Merrick's? Is not it the same day on which you are to receive the legacy from Stanton?"

"Yes; I call on him in my way;—it will not be many miles out of my road to Merrick's."

"And take the treasure with you?—To be sure, you sleep at Merrick's."

"No; but, as the road is bad at night, I shall leave early."

"Early! what do you call early?" asked his friend with a smile.

"About nine: it will be scarcely dark then, and I and Jumper know the road well."

“ But you will have young Ekton with you, and a servant ? ”

“ Neither. Edward is not invited; and what with turning out to grass, and lameness, I have no spare horse: and you know I never want a servant tagging after me.”

“ But, with all that money about you ! ”

“ Who will know it ? ”

“ Do not trust to that; and it is only Sanson, and one or two others, who say that a man must be a coward, or have an evil conscience, to be afraid to ride alone by night.”

“ With two good pistols, without which I never ride alone at night, I am afraid of no one.”

“ Not this famous highwayman about whom people rave? I hear he has stopped several, and boasts that no gentleman is bold enough to ride alone at night for fear of him,—yet he is but one, and would scorn to take an advantage.”

“ Says he so? A fine bold fellow ! ” replied the squire,—“ only he lies! I am not

would not heed the sneers of strange
braggart boasts of a highwayman
mind what the fellow may say,
servant."

"I am resolved,—so say no more
subject. The fellow shall not boast
ening Philip Conyers;—timidity
will but increase his daring. Let him
he will find his match."

"Mabel's pleadings will change
and furnish an unimpeachable excuse
ing an attendant."

"If you regard me, Durnsford
know nothing of this," said the schoolboy.
"I am no bragging schoolboy, torn
or changed by a woman's tears. I
fellow will not dare to attack me."

and looking as proud as your proud ancestor who bearded one of the Henrys in his own hall, I forget for what. Come, come, you must make some allowance for the anxiety of friendship."

"Prove that friendship, then, by engaging not to say another word on this subject to me or others."

"If you insist."

"I do insist," replied the squire warmly.

"Then I submit. I admire your bravery:—it is what few would dare with such a sum,—many without. You ought to be knighted, like your other ancestor Sir Edward, for keeping a whole army at bay in a narrow pass."

"You dine at Merrick's, don't you?" asked the squire, pacified by his promised silence, and flattered by the eulogium on his bravery.

"I am very sorry that it is not in my power; but you saw the letter from Turnbull, appointing me to meet him many miles the contrary way. I told Merrick he ought to have fixed some other day. It is provoking;—for I understand several of the best masters

of hounds in the kingdom will be present, whom I particularly wished to meet. But, heyday ! it is nearly time we were off to Barrett's, if we intend to walk ; and I am not dressed." And away went Mr. Durnsford to adorn.

CHAPTER III.

“ARE you ill, Mr. Elton?” asked Mabel softly, as he stood at the window, waiting for the squire and Mr. Durnsford. The young man turned abruptly, and met the inquiring look of the gentle girl, who had advanced timidly towards him, and was expecting his reply.

“And if I were ill, what would it matter?—you would not grieve.”

“Not grieve?”

“Would you?” he inquired eagerly, advancing to where she stood, and gazing earnestly upon her.

“How could you think that I should not?”

For a moment longer he gazed on her with delight, then demanded hastily,

“Why call me Mr. Elton, when your father bade you be less formal and call me Edward?”

She hesitated an instant, and then said, "You have not been the same the last few days: or I fancied so."

"And have I only changed, Miss Conyers? Do we stand in the same position to each other as we stood, not three weeks since? Have your feelings undergone no alteration? You are silent, and turn away. How have I deserved this change?"

"I did not say that I had changed."

"Will you assert that you have not?"

"Most certainly."

"Will you say that you esteem me now, as when we went to Martha Wilford's cottage?"

"Indeed I do!"

"I will not,—I cannot doubt you;—yet days have passed since I have found a place beside you—since we have spoken of our thoughts and feelings:—another has been ever near you—another has engaged your attention."

"Mr. Durnsford does talk a great deal, and would sit down beside me," she replied, so simply, that he feared no more, yet, lover-like, sought further assurance.

“It was not your choice, then?”

“No: I found him wearying sometimes.”

“But why call me Mr. Elton so coldly and so formally?”

“Mr. Durnsford and Miss Marsden hinted at the propriety of my so doing,”—blushing more deeply as she spoke.

“Ha! Is it so? I thought as much.”

“Thought what?” asked Mabel in surprise.

“That Durnsford is my enemy.”

“You wrong him!—he ever speaks most highly of you.”

He looked incredulous.

“Then why induce you to a display of coldness?”

“Not coldness: he would not—I would not.”

“You would not have acquiesced had he required coldness?” asked Edward eagerly as she paused and hesitated.

“No—I would never give you pain!”

“Thank you!—thank you! Then you will call me Edward as before? I have your father’s sanction.”

“ You call me Miss Conyers.”

“ I will call you so no more, but Mabel now, — hereafter, I will hope, my own dear Mabel. I will no longer bear suspense.”

“ Then you are not ill ?” said Mabel softly, taking no notice by her words of his pretensions.

“ Quite well now, fair Mabel ; you have cured me.”

“ Then you were ill, or anxious ? I feared your letter pained you — that it brought evil news.”

He started, and the brightness of his look was clouded.

“ Then it did bring evil news,” she said with touching sympathy.

“ Yes ; but it was — it must have been — founded on misconception. Your father” — he stopped abruptly.

“ — Will do anything to serve you,” said his daughter, kindly pained at his sudden agitation.

“ Your father serve ? Mabel, tell me, and

tell me truly, why has your father changed towards me within the last few days ?”

“Changed ? I have seen no change.”—He could not doubt the sincerity of her surprise at the supposition ; but that was little consolation.

“ Could I have fancied ? — But no — what you have failed to see, I have felt. The coldness of which Martha Wilford spoke has surely come ; and it bears date from Mr. Durnsford’s first arrival :—he is no friend of mine. It is he who leads Mr. Conyers into those scenes which he so lately condemned — who ever seeks to give to my avoidance of excess the appearance of a harsh rebuke to others, and all with the semblance of simplicity or friendship. It is he has done me wrong with your kind father. —But I will bear no more. I——”

“ Hush ! hush ! for pity, hush ! Do not think my father regards you less ; do not judge thus of Mr. Durnsford : and, oh ! do not look so fiercely !”

“ Fiercely upon you, Mabel ? Never !

against——”

“ —My own fiery temper,” said man, concluding her sentence.

“ Yes !” she replied with a smile
ing, it should have stilled the most
fury.

“ I will be calm and gentle—all
sweet Mabel. But must I bear y
coldness without question ? and I
malice without mention ?”

“ Coldness ! and malice ! You
was cold but lately—yet you do n
now.”

“ No, not now ; but they are not

“ Oh, no ! not half so simple.—E
are calling you. Good-b’ye ! but p
that you will be calm and gentle—s

what more can you desire? And you—you will not change?—you will not judge me harshly, nor think evil of me, let others say the worst they may?”

“Never! Now go.”

“Yes, with a lighter heart, but not with pleasure. I dislike Sir Thomas Barrett and his usual guests; but I will strive to win your praise. What would I not do for such a *guer-don*?”

He went; and Mabel was left to herself. The work and the music, the pencil and the book, were all laid aside, after a brief trial:—her mind was not with any. There was a deeper flush than usual on her cheek; and her slender fingers guided not the pencil firmly; and, for the music, the hands wandered over the ivory keys scarcely more white, and one tune mingled with another, till, shocked at the discord, she strolled out into the pleasant shrubbery, where the sun glanced through the interwoven branches with a soft and fitful light, whilst the birds filled all the air with their wild minstrelsy. She sat down on a mossy

of the golden sun, setting in glory i
gleamed on and around her, sheddi
dour over her gentle and touching
But the sweet music of the birds—
murmur of the breeze among the le
—the golden glories of the setting su
more sweet, more gentle, or more gl
the day-dreams of that young an
being.

If that heart had had its troubles,
all gone now, or they were hushed.
sent was before her in its beauty—s
not the future ; all around her see
up of peace, and joy, and loveliness
ful Mabel ! who might not envy
for thy loveliness, but for thy pure
cent heart, shedding its radiance
things She was in peace and love -

they not linger?—will not the future bring her brighter hues and lovelier visions still? Ask not of the future!—she knew it not, or the dream had ended and the vision fled. What though the rose must fade to-morrow? its beauties are our own to-day. And for the joys of a grateful, humble heart, like the waves of the summer,—

“As one dies away,
Another as bright and as shining comes on.”

It was early when, throwing aside the pencil and the book, the needle and the music, she sought the greenwood wild; for the dinner in those days was served at two—that rather late than early; (we marvel how our grandfathers could dine at such an uncouth hour;) yet there she sat till the trees threw a lengthened shadow, and the dusky twilight gathered round her. What matter for the evening gloom?—the mind dwells in its own place—the heart lives in its own light!

CHAPTER IV.

TWILIGHT deepened and deepened till it grew into night; yet there she sat at the open window, looking out on the grey vaulted arch above, thickly studded with its golden stars—the lights in the room untrimmed—the night-breeze murmuring round unheeded. A hurried step was on the stairs—she held her breath to listen, and yet she knew whose foot it was without the staying of her breath. The door was thrown hastily open, and as hastily closed;—a quick step advanced to the centre of the apartment, then stopped abruptly;—and there was no motion, and no sound, but the heavy breathing of the intruder. The bloom deepened on Mabel's cheek—the long lashes fell over her downcast eyes; but she neither spoke nor stirred.

“ You will not speak to me! You will not

welcome me! Even you despise me!"—exclaimed the intruder passionately.

Mabel looked up, and, by the flickering light of the untrimmed candles, saw Edward Elton gazing on her with a burning eye and contracted brow, over which his hair, disarranged by his speed and the night air, hung in wild disorder; whilst a crimson spot as of wrath or shame was distinctly marked on his clear cheek.

"What has happened?" she asked wildly, starting up and advancing towards him, for his agitation could not pass unnoticed. "You alone! Where is my father?—my dear kind father?"

"At Sir Thomas Barrett's," he replied in a bitter tone.

"Well?—quite well? Tell me truly!"

"Well!—quite well!—revelling with the revellers—draining the wine-cup to the dregs—proving himself to be a man, by sinking to the level of a brute."

"Thank Heaven!" said Mabel fervently, replying only to his assurance of her father's safety.

"Certainly, Miss Conyers has cause to be

—” and Mabel turned away without
ing, for she knew that her voice falt
that tears were in her eyes.

The tone of the speaker had be
harsh and sarcastic even than his word

“ You grieve?—and it is I who h
you grieve! Shame on my lips, th
say such bitter words! Forgive me
Tears too, and of my causing! Wh
do to atone for this cruelty? If you
if you could guess—what I have born
last few hours, you might forgive me;
cannot guess—you cannot understan
you will not pardon!” exclaimed th
man passionately; yet softness ming
that passion, and his fierce look and t
gone. “ You will not pardon me?”
with melancholy earnestness

It was not for myself—it was what you said of my father,—but you did not—you could not mean to be unkind?—to say harsh things of him?” — looking entreatingly into his flashing eyes.

“ I meant not to pain you,” he replied evasively.

“ But my father — my dear kind father — you may mourn that he should yield to the persuasions of others, but you love him still? — love him as I love him ?”

“ And if I did, the chance is that he would despise my love,” observed the young man bitterly.

“ If you did? Surely you do! And why should he despise it?”

“ Because—” he began as fiercely as before ; then, checking his wrath, he turned abruptly from her, pacing the room with hurried steps. For some minutes the gentle girl looked upon him in silent fear and sorrow ; then, gathering courage, spoke as he approached her in his hurried pacing.

“ Is this silence kind? Tell me what has

passed? I entreat—I implore you. Any—everything would be preferable to my fears.”

He came close up to her, and, restraining his wrath, spoke with unnatural slowness and distinctness.

“Why seek to know what has occurred? Enough that I must away—I cannot linger—and we two must part.”

“Away?—and we must part? Tell me! tell me!” clasping her hands imploringly.

“You said my father was quite well?”

“Quite well,” he repeated in the same unnatural tone.

“And Mr. Durnsford?”

“And Mr. Durnsford. He seems a favourite of yours,” he added bitterly.

“But you—you are not well!” she said in tones that should have soothed him: but he was in a wayward mood that night—

“Wrath in his heart, and fever in his brain.”

“Think not of me! If your father and your favourite are quite well, what matter if a friendless stranger should have an aching heart and aching brow?”

“Do I deserve this, Mr. Elton?” she asked in a voice so low — so soft — so sad, that he could scarcely catch the sound.

“No, Mabel, gentlest! best! — you do not deserve it. But I am not myself to-night. Bear with me! I have been branded as a coward, — taunted as a puritan and hypocrite! Ay, Mabel, and by your father too! — though not as loudly as by some. Is it strange, then, that my brow is as a burning coal, and my cheek red with shame? But look you kindly on me, Mabel, and I shall grow calm. Tell me that you see no shame upon my brow! Let me hear that dear soft voice say that you do not hate me, and I will be gentle as a lamb before you.”

“Hate you? I could not, if I would! But tell me more. Your words are fearful — and your eyes gleam out so fiercely that I cannot look upon them.”

“Not fiercely upon you, sweet Mabel.”

“Not now. Sit down beside me: I must hear all.”

“More than enough! — all is unfit for wo-

She did listen in fear and tre

At first, his words came slow though Mabel guessed it not, but more than his usual quantity : his mental faculty was obscured : his memory appeared endowed with distinctness, as though each and opprobrious term had been his heart in characters of fire. He proceeded, his words came quicker and more distinct—the excitement mastering the parching of his throat—the first great trial of his life—suffering and to censure, and the prosperous bear a first reversal—his spirit revolted at the indignities heaped on him ; and he did not stop to ask

“ I went, as you know, reluctantly. I had seen too much of Sir Thomas Barrett, and his usual companions, to feel any inclination for further intercourse; but your father would have been offended had I not gone. I marked his coolness towards me during our walk; and before we entered the house, I found that he considered me over-scrupulous—too abstemious to be good company. Why, then, had he insisted on my going? I pass over the chilling and formal salutations of some of the guests—the over-warmth of the others. I little heeded either; my thoughts were with you, and with your father—of what I resolved should not be deferred after the next day; for I will not sit at your father’s board one moment longer than he bids me welcome,—no! not even to win her I love.

“ Mr. Durnsford, in a friendly tone, advised me to drink a little more than usual to please Mr. Conyers, who had spoken on the subject. Fool that I was! I consented: I should have known he was no friend. All was peace till he came, then doubt and care.

tioned—taunted—but could not, and we conceal my disapproval. ‘Then why you like not our company or our talk one. I rose to depart, but, yielding to the wishes of Mr. Conyers, the host, and retook my seat. Better had I gone than some words from Durnsford decided me they were carelessly spoken, yet I do that they had a meaning.

“Again the wine went round; then the song succeeded; the punch was made stirred with the fox’s pad, and the soldiers the drinkers hailed its appearance. the host nod to one of his guests; whispers, and gathered enough to learn was resolved I should not leave the table. There being no lady of the house, there

was likely to be cause for offence given ; and if I drank more, it was probable that I should take offence too promptly. Of those around me, if not completely intoxicated, few, save Durnsford, were absolutely sober. A toast was given : I declined more wine. The toast referring to no individual, my refusing to drink it should have offended none ; and when asked for the reason of my refusal, I frankly stated that I had already drunk more than enough, and, not being used to their drinking parties, could not stand them.

“ Some pressed me whose manner was friendly, though I doubt if their meaning was such ; but, finding me unmoved, each had a word to taunt and wound. There were doubts thrown out as to my being a gentleman, from my not knowing the universal rule not to refuse a toast, and from my owning no hunter till your father’s present. There were loud taunts as to my sincerity. I was called puritan !—hypocrite ! —an insolent reprover of my elders ! My defence was not listened to, for many spoke at once. Finding my temper giving

“ ‘Go !’ whispered Durnsford. It is
advice. Did he mean it kindly ?

“ ‘Drink the toast !’ shouted the

“ ‘Drink the toast !’ shouted his
still more loudly.

“ ‘Will you let me go on the
urge me to drink no more, if I do ?’

“ ‘No, no ! drink all the toasts,
many.

“ ‘Hear me, Sir Thomas Barrett,
‘If you asked me here to do me
pleasure, I thank you, and, as my
will urge me to do nothing displeasing
self, or contrary to what I consider
If you asked me only to furnish you
to laugh at my scruples, and force
what I condemn, I owe you no

“Sir Thomas was silent ; but another plainly avowed their views.

“ ‘ It is of no use arguing, young man, for we are not going to put up with your preaching, and let you triumph over us. We are resolved that you shall for once be gloriously drunk, and are not prepared to be balked ; so you had better submit in silence. Drink the toast ! the bowl of punch as a forfeit for refusal—or salt and water as a punishment ! Such are the rules in our parties.’

“ ‘ Never !’ I replied indignantly.

“ ‘ Drag him down !’ shouted many with fearful oaths, rising tumultuously for the purpose of fulfilling the threat.

“ ‘ Stand back, gentlemen !’ I exclaimed. ‘ I warn you to desist. I will not yield while I have strength or life. Touch me not ! or there will be harm to some. Let me depart in peace !’

“ As I spoke, I took up my host’s sword, which was accidentally lying near, and waving it round, gained an open space before me, whilst I placed my back against the wall, pre-

my friend ; but, to say the best of h
they were misunderstood, and only
flame. The tumult rose higher than
the riotous revellers seemed inclined to
me, though half withheld by my bol
and the gleaming sword. Your fath
I could not hear his words distinctly ;
had the effect of urging on the madde
He advanced towards me with an
arm, as though his hand would be t
be laid upon me. He spoke to some
him ; but his words were lost in the
shouts of ‘ Force him down !—se
make him drink !’ Once more I suc
clearing a small space before me ; b
that this could not last. There w
against me. True, I was sober—t

door ; to force my way thence was impossible—too many had rushed to guard it. There I stood, hemmed in with foes—their eyes gleaming on me, their lips uttering taunting words—all eager to rush upon me, scarcely withheld by the naked weapon in my hand. I had no friend there ; your father, he whom I had loved and respected—he too was against me, standing forward in the circle with his arm ready to seize me. I was well nigh as mad as those around me ; my wild young blood was up—I would not yield ; if they dared the struggle, they must abide the consequences.

“ They saw that I would not yield—that I would use the weapon in my hand ; and there was a momentary pause—the fearful pause which precedes the mortal strife. Mr. Conyers advanced into the open space, which I had hitherto maintained before me. ‘ Well done ! Seize him ! seize him ! —force him down ! ’ shouted the band. His hand was nearly on my arm,—I could pause no longer—I swept the sword——”

Mabel, — and I had sat at his board
watched by his couch. There is
upon my hands—look at them—they
press yours. Forgive me, that, in my
excitement, I forgot your fears. Be calm
was no evil done to any.”

“Thank Heaven! — Go on—I will
all.”

“But you tremble now.”

“Say on!” waving her hand impatiently

“I have said the door was strongly
locked; but the windows opened on the
the shutters had not been closed. I
strike your father:—I sought the life
though, had they laid hands upon me
I could not have answered for my acts. I was
not trained to feats of agility. Swiftly

heads on the table—dashed out the window with a chair, and vaulting through, was standing on the lawn before those within had comprehended the sudden crash, or the mode of my escape.

“There rose several view-halloos—your father’s voice above the rest; with the shouts of ‘Slunk away! ware hound!’ and other cries. In truth, had I been a wild beast, there could not have been more eagerness to hunt me down—I will not say to the death, but it might have been. Happily for me, their very eagerness defeated its own object, and they fell one over the other. I lingered not: they thought themselves secure of their prey, for the only door from the garden was well secured; but the wall was no barrier to me. By the aid of a tree, I gained the top, and dropped down on the other side before my pursuers were in sight. Yet their taunting shouts long rung in my ears, though I tarried not by the way. Rung—said I? they are ringing still. Thank Heaven! I was saved from shedding blood: but I would not be so tried again—no,

critic! and this from your father, or
sanction! There were taunts too of
because I owned no relatives. Slan
famed—and by your father! The
shame is on me—it must be removed.

He bowed his head on his clasped
whilst his breathing was as heavy sigh

“You must not heed such words,
time,” said Mabel soothingly. “Tell
not what they said. I have heard
like these before, yet never thought
morning. You must forget—”

“Forget!—I cannot school my
easily. You do not understand our
on such points: it is not with your ge-
tures as with us—we cannot brook dis-

“Is it dishonour to be falsely c

word, its very falsehood calls for punishment."

"What punishment?" she asked more steadily.

"He who said it, must recant—or—"

"Or what?" she demanded firmly.

"The stain must be washed out," he answered fiercely.

"'Thou shalt do no murder!'"

The young man started at the words spoken in a tone so low, and yet so clear; for an instant he gazed on her who had uttered the rebuke—his gleaming eye fell beneath her pitying look, and his face was again bowed on his clasped hands.

For a time he spoke not; a low sob broke the silence—he raised his head, and the flush had left his cheek—he was pale, deadly pale, and his eye was dim. His voice startled his hearer.

"Would you have me live dishonoured?"

The weeper checked her sobs.

"Who shall dishonour you but yourself?
—what but your own acts?"

“ Forget all that passed.”

“ That cannot be !—you ask in vain
their tauntings still. As I said before
I feel but as a woman. Would you
live beneath the mock of scorn ?”

“ Rather than beneath the wrath of

He gazed upon her in surprise—the
sublimity in her beauty that he had
before. She was no longer the gentle
yielding girl ;—she was the Christian
—pleading, warning.

“ You may be right ;—those are
who do not feel the wrong.”

“ Believe me that I feel your wrong
is revenge for man ? You gave not
for you to take it ? Can the words of
minded bring a stain on the pure ?
You have mistaken . . .

the words uncanceled? How should I meet your father's eye? the eyes of honourable men?"

"Shall he who fears not the eye of God, shrink from the eye of man? And why think that there is shame upon you? Is it shame to withstand evil? to brave the mocking jest, and the gibing taunt? Is there shame in this? No! and you would not think so were another in your place."

"Then you do not despise me?"

"I admire,—I revere you!"

"Say more,—say that you love me, Mabel; breathe but that word, and I am as a slave before you, to do with as you will."

She withdrew her hand, with a gentle but reproving gravity.

"It is the motive which gives value to the deed. Grant not that for the sake of one erring as yourself, which you refuse to Him in whom there is no shadow of turning."

"Is this a moment for reproof?" he asked reproachfully.

"Reproof! Do not give my words so harsh a name: I would but see you as yourself."

posing the commands of God, she c
there is error. Forgive me! I
blame you ; but I tremble at your w

“ Yet you do blame me, Mabel, th
would deny it. You would have
shame and contumely with a crouch
and a shameless brow.”

“ Rather, with a steady mind a
giving heart: I would not have y
shame where there is none.”

“ But, spaniel-like, to fawn upon
that strikes !” he exclaimed with l
“ Had a blow been given, you wo
said the same, and called on me to
all in meekness. The blow ! the s
taunt !”

“ Did not the high and lofty C
Mabel of A

"I cannot bear dishonour!"

"We can bear little in our own strength alone."

He turned away—he could not meet her look.

"But there was no blow?" she said more softly.

"No; their hands were not upon me, or I know not what had been. For that, at least, I would be thankful."

"And words, mere words," she said with gentle earnestness; "words spoken when the blood was warm—the head not clear; you should not think upon such things again. They who said them will not.—But you heed me not; you think me cold, unfeeling. Oh! I am neither," she added, laying a gentle touch upon his arm, for his face was bowed again upon his hands.

He looked up at her tremulous voice, and his wrath vanished as he saw her tears. His proud spirit was subdued; it bowed before her gentle piety.

"Mabel, what would you?"

through her tears.

“ I am not worthy of this gentleness could I wrong it by suspicion or deny your father—how shall I meet him if we must part !”

“ Part !” she repeated ; then addressed him, “ My father said you had promised to remain a while. Will you not ?” she was looking down.

“ Not after to-night. Your father could not mean that.”

“ There is some mistake,” she said, interrupting him. “ He could mean no other thing. He will tell you so himself to-morrow.”

He shook his head.

“ Will you be hard to be entreated ?”

“ Not if you entreat me ; but, in honest truth,”

“ I am vexed to have to tell you so.”

“ Know what, Ned ?” asked Mabel in alarm.

“ Oh, nothing, Miss, to be so frightened about as that comes to : only, as I was a-coming home with the dog as master sent me arter, I seed all the gentlemen from Sir Thomas Barrett’s a-coming along to the Grange, some singing, and some talking ; and, to my mind, they bean’t fit company for you just now—though, from what I overheard, they be coming to do you honour, Miss Mabel ; and they talked a great deal about Master Elton here.”

“ What did they say of me ?” inquired the young man quickly.

“ Something about catching you yet, sir : they seemed angry you had a got here afore them. If I had a known you had told my young lady, I should not a come in ; but, to my eye, there is not one there that could walk steady up to Miss Mabel, or is fit to talk with her. I hopes, Miss, you bean’t offended with the liberty,” he added in a deprecating tone ; for Mabel’s silence, and her pale and troubled look, could not be very gratifying to a bearer of news.

my room directly. Do not mention
ing told me of their coming, if you
done so already ; and say, if asked,
to bed. Say the same of Mr. Elton
tioned : if not, do not name him."

"We will retire immediately," said
as old Ned closed the door.

"This is too much to expect : even
not require it," he replied.

"I do not require, but I request—
it," she said, her alarm increasing
marked the crimson spot upon his cheek.

"Ask not what I must refuse ! I will
you nothing, but this I cannot do.
as a wild beast, I stand at bay. I can
no further—let him come on who dares
prepared."

as a wild beast, I stand at bay.

of her alarm gave her the power to control it: She shrunk not from the fierce flashing of his eye; she saw him look around for a weapon, but she did not tremble.

“Seek not for defence; no weapons shall be crossed beneath this roof. You have sat at my father’s side—would you take his life in the home of his fathers? You saved his child—would you shed blood before her eyes? take back the life you saved? You bade her look to you for protection—would you make her name the jest and the by-word of the drunken and the thoughtless? If you remain, she will abide here too. Hear me,” she continued, as he strove to interrupt her, though struck with her appeal. “Hear me further:—You have said once this night that you would do my bidding if I spoke one little word. I besought you to pursue the right from higher motives; but I feared not then, as I fear now. I am weak—may Heaven pardon me! I pray you do my bidding now—I implore you to withdraw in pity to my fears. You will not refuse my prayers?”

He tried to shun her gaze, to throw off her gentle hold ; but those pleading tones, that pallid cheek, the tender earnestness of those soft eyes, were as a spell which he could not break.

“ You will go ? I thank you,” she said, whilst a faint glow came on her cheek, and a light into her eye ; for she felt that her suit was won, though he spoke not.

“ Would you have me fly them ? Would not that be cowardice ?” he asked in a doubting tone.

“ No ! no !” she replied impatiently, thinking she heard a distant shout. “ You must feel it would be better that you should not meet to-night. There is too warm blood in all ; and we know not that they come to seek you out : he said their purpose was to do me honour. Retire ! they may not ask for you ; and you need hear nothing in your distant chamber.”

“ And you, Mabel, you will meet the gaze of the flashing eyes, and listen to the flattering words, of the heated reveller !”

"This from you?"

She drew back; and for the first time he met her indignant glance.

"Mabel, forgive me! I am not myself to-night."

"I hope not," she answered sadly.

"I feared what those rude men might say to you. You do forgive me, Mabel,—dear, gentle being?"

"Yes. I shall not see those men. Go now—promise me to lock your door, and not unclose it, let who will clamour for admittance: tempt not evil by another meeting. I hope none will seek you."

"This is asking much."

"It is; but you will grant it?"

"I can refuse nothing to those gentle tones:—but you will speak that one short word I prayed for?"

"This is no time!—Go! go!"

"Ah, Mabel! you win me to compliance, and then——"

"I thank you most warmly—most sincerely."

"But you will not speak that little word?"

“Not now ; you should not ask it !”

“To-morrow, then ?”

He read her promise in her downcast look.

When the first shout was distinctly heard, no light was to be seen in any apartment but those appropriated to the servants.

As the revellers came within sight of the house, they halted to arrange their scattered party, many of whom were far behind ; yet but little could be said for their order, after all their endeavours.

“All right ?” inquired one of the party, who had undertaken to marshal the drunken host, having once been at a review of militia.

“Ay, ay ! all right !” shouted several, swerving from their places as they spoke.

“To the right about, face ! present ! fire !” exclaimed the orderer of their march.

“Ay, ay !” again shouted the band, understanding that they were to advance, and, fortunately, possessing no muskets to present or fire.

On moved the noisy rout, with fifes squeaking, drums beating ; for they had procured the

attendance of the village musicians, with their whitts and dubbs,—the fashionable instruments of the time at country balls, before Weippert and Collinet were in being. The musicians were intended to have been in advance of the rest of the party; and probably they were also intended to have kept time and tune with each other: but neither intention was fulfilled. No sooner was the body again in motion than it became broken and scattered, as, instead of keeping in his proper place, each sought to be the first. Some fell over the shrubs or into the flower-beds—many over one another, each blaming his overthrower as the cause of the mischief. Some who were reeling away to the right, instead of the left, shouted to keep in line; others, who, seeing double, and unable to steady their steps, found the flower-garden at the Grange as difficult to thread as the Cretan Labyrinth, called for help. The musicians, some amateurs — some professors, who had been pressed into the service, and treated before their departure to increase their skill, played different tunes, or kept different time. “Blow

high, blow low," mingled with "Kate of Aberdeen," "Rule, Britannia!" and "God save the King!" enlivened by an old jig; whilst those who should have reserved their powers till under Mabel's window, and the striking up of the appropriate air, began the verses composed in her praise in the middle of a bar of the national anthem.

Never was such a riotous, ill-ordered crew assembled by moonlight under a maiden's window to do honour to her charms, as this band of revellers from Sir Thomas Barrett's. The uproar startled Nature from her rest. The sleeping birds woke up at the shouts, and fluttered among the boughs; the owl and the night-hawk screamed and hooted as they sailed away to a stiller spot; the poultry started from their roosts with crow and cackle; the loose dogs rushed round with bark and howl, whilst those in the kennels lent their aid to increase the fiendish tumult.

If the name of Mabel Conyers was heard from the straining of the singer's voice, the praise that accompanied it was lost; and the

wild halloo, and the shouts for help, mingled with oaths and laughter, were the softest chorus to the strain. To have seen that struggling, staggering band, reeling over the smooth green turf, or crashing through the shrubs with their wild halloos, and their wilder gestures, and their shrill, discordant music,—and to think that they came to do praise and honour to a gentle girl,—might have made the gravest laugh till the woods echoed with their merriment, had there been no mingling of regret that the players of these antics were immortal beings, who took no thought of the account which they must one day render !

Mabel saw not the disorderly advance of this honorary band, for she dared not look from the window ; but the din was astounding, and she would have closed her ears, only for her anxiety to learn if another name was joined with hers.

“ Which is her window ? ” shouted the husky voice of Sir Thomas Barrett, who was the principal person in the procession and the liberal payer of the performers.

“That,” said the squire, pointing to the one beside which leant the panting Mabel, unseen by those without.

“Now, then, play away, my boys! Let us sing the praises of the beautiful Mabel. You know the words, Waters; mind and sing loud enough, and we will all join in.”

The order was obeyed, only a few of the stragglers being left on the greensward, or still struggling among the shrubs; and again were the praises of Mabel chanted to the mingled harmonies of “Rule, Britannia!” and “Blow high, blow low,” chorused by the barking dogs.

Alas for the zealous singers! Mabel heard not her own praises, and thought not of those who sang them.

“Why, she won’t show herself, though we have come all this way to sing her beauty!” exclaimed the disappointed baronet.

“Mabel is shy,” said the squire.

“Better go and tell her why we are come; perhaps she is asleep,” suggested one of the singers.

“Asleep!” thought Durnsford: “then the last trump will scarcely awaken her.”

“Open the door, Mabel!” shouted her father, pounding on it, impatient at her delay.

“Are you alone?”

“Yes, to be sure! Open the door, I say!”

She did open it; and the light he carried gleamed on her pale cheek. There was little of the timidity of which he had accused her:—she felt no alarm, or it was too great to admit of being shown by the usual marks. Her father gazed upon her in surprise, for there was that in her look and demeanour which he did not comprehend—something which he had never seen before. Her dressing-gown was folded round her, but not a curl was displaced; and either she had re-dressed in haste on the approach of the uproar, or had not unrobed, imagining that her presence might be required.

“You must go to the window and show yourself,” said her father, putting down the candle on the table. “Sir Thomas Barrett and all his visitors, with all the singers and

musicians he could collect, are come to sing your praises, and pay you a compliment."

"I would that they had stayed at home," observed Mabel coldly.

"I told them that you were shy and would scarcely thank them, yet it would not do; and Durnsford said the same, but his words only made them more resolved on coming. Yet, now that they are here, you must go to the window and thank them—they have had many falls on their way."

"Is it fitting, sir, that your daughter should look from her window at this hour of night to parley with those who know not what they say or do — who have drowned the wisdom that should guide their steps?"

"But they are come to do you honour!"

"Is it honour, for those who have drunk of the vine till their steps and their reason reel, and their lips speak evil words, to come to a motherless maiden and shout till the peaceful wake with fright, and bid her come at their call and say, 'I thank you?'"

"Why, Mabel, what is come to you to-

night? — you, so gentle — so timid — to look and speak so proudly! How is this?”

“Mabel Conyers may be gentle to those she loves; but she brooks not insult from strangers.”

“Insult, Mabel! Would your father sanction an insult, think you? Sir Thomas Barrett loves you.”

“Sir Thomas Barrett love me!”

“Yes, child, though you look so strange and scornful. He seeks you for his wife—and a good match it will be. A clear ten thousand a-year — capital hounds and hunters: not a better establishment in the kingdom! One of the right sort too, like his father: keeps up old customs—hospitable and good-tempered, drinks three bottles and none the worse. His father proposed it before his death; but I said, no; the young man should see you first—not buy a pig in a poke. He has seen and likes you, so it is all settled; and he will soon say something to you about it. To be sure, I was not to have told you yet, only you put me out by talking of an insult.—But what is the matter,

Mabel? How strange you look!—as though you wished to speak, and could not. And why do you clasp your hands in that wild way? Do not be silly! Come to the window and thank them; and then they will all go home again. You cannot think it an insult, when I tell you that he has my permission to woo you.”

“Say not so!” exclaimed Mabel, resisting his efforts to draw her to the window; “I cannot love him—do not give me to him!” and throwing her arms round her father’s neck, she burst into a passion of tears.

The kind squire was in despair. He could not understand how his daughter should have any objection to marry a baronet with ten thousand a-year—one of the best hunting establishments in England—hospitable, good-tempered, and, as the world said, a prodigious fine man—that is, large enough, with tolerably good, but inexpressive features. It was entirely beyond his comprehension, and at first he thought it only maidenly timidity; but when her tears became more passionate, her

declarations of the impossibility of loving him more decided, and her entreaties that he would not compel her to the match more earnest, completely sobered by the strange occurrence, he began to soothe and console her; for a woman's tears, and that woman his only daughter, to whom he had become much attached, were not to be withstood.

“ Well! well! Mabel, don't cry! —I cannot bear your tears.”

“ Say you will not force me to be his.”

“ Force you, my child! I am not a Turk—I will not force you to marry any one;—but you will try to like him—for my sake.”

“ I cannot—I cannot,—do not ask it;” and her tears flowed afresh.

“ Well, hush, Mabel,—hush! What would you have me do?”

“ Oh, send them away!—all, each—directly. Do not let one remain,—do not let one come in.—Hark! they will force an entrance. Go! go!—send them away!” she continued, putting him wildly from her, and pointing to the door.

house.

“Go, go, if you would have senses: let them not come in! away!”

“I will;—they shall all go—no in: but for Heaven’s sake be calm

“I shall be calm when they I hear them at the door.”

Alarmed at Mabel’s wild look, her father rushed to the door, of the party were effecting their escape. After a time, succeeded in making stand the terror which they had persuaded them to return without delay. Sir Thomas sent what he fitting message to his lady love, noisy rout began their retreat,—disorderly as had been the advance.

the disappointment of the troop and its leader.

No sooner had the retreating party passed beyond the lawn, than the squire returned to Mabel, whom he found as pale as before, but something calmer, though there was still a wildness in her look and an abruptness in her speech that he had never known till now.

"Are they gone?—all gone?" she asked as he entered.

"All gone!" he replied, passing his arm round her waist, and drawing her fondly towards him. "I am vexed that you should have been frightened; and so is Sir Thomas. He bade me say, that if he had thought you would not have liked——"

"How could I like such a fearful noise?" she said, interrupting him.

"They did make a great noise, I must admit. And so you thought it was the robbers, poor simple child!"

"Not so," said Mabel, who abhorred even the appearance of untruth; "but their shouts were fearful. Did they really only come to sing under my window?"

“For what else should they come?”

“I know not; but it was so strange and unfitting their coming here!—and I fancied I heard Mr. Elton’s name, when you were with me.”

“You are trembling still, child. They meant no harm to you or any one; though they were wrath with him at the time. Have you seen Edward? I hope no evil has befallen him.”

“He is well,” she replied, her face still hid on her father’s shoulder.

“Then he is not gone away in a pet?”

“He is in his room.”

“And not disturbed by all this noise! He must sleep soundly, though his room is at the other end of the house. Did he tell you what passed?”

“Yes; and it was at my earnest entreaty, in pity to my fears, that he promised not to leave his room unless compelled. I feared, when old Ned kindly told me who were coming, that they were pursuing him: and had they met—” she paused.

“ You did wisely, Mabel, in your terror : he was too warm to make the meeting safe ; and I cannot blame his warmth, for they carried the jesting much too far. I would have interfered, but I fear I was hardly fit for the task then, though the air has refreshed me now. Did he speak unkindly of me ? I think he misunderstood, and believed I meant to join the others, and lay hands on him, when I intended to stand by his side, if I could not stop them ; for I admired his boldness, though I think he had better have complied. To be sure, enough was said to heat young blood to anything ; and when I saw the sword in his hand, I feared for the lives of some : but he did well, and I like him the better for his forbearance. You do not say if he spoke unkindly of your father.”

“ That he was hurt I cannot deny, believing that you intended to join against him ; and he thought you, too, used injurious terms, as others did.”

“ I do not wonder he was hurt if he thought that,” remarked the squire frankly. “ I might have said such things ; but if I did, it was

without knowing and without meaning them ; and it was my positive command that stopped the pursuit. It was a foolish piece of business altogether ; and I am sorry that I did not interfere at first."

"Will you not tell him this ?—or may I?" asked Mabel earnestly.

"Ah, Mabel ! I suppose his blood was up ; and but for you he would have been off to-morrow, or perhaps to-night ; and I could not have blamed him. I will go and speak to him at once—I should not sleep in peace else ; and the rest shall apologise, if he should require it. I fear this night has scarcely been to the credit of any of us. I have not been so much with you lately, or, in time, I think you would make me as gentle as yourself ; it grieves me so to see you sad or weeping. Durnsford goes to-morrow, and then we shall be more quiet. I have not been so happy for the last three weeks. Go to bed and sleep off your fright, whilst I visit Edward. Good night !—and mind you come down in the morning as fresh and as gay as a lark."

"Thank you! thank you!" said Mabel, twining her arms round his neck as he kissed her forehead.

"Open the door, Edward!" said the squire.

"I am come to say that I am sorry for what passed at Barrett's."

The door was opened, and the squire started at the look of his guest, as he had started at the look of his child.

"You misunderstood me, Edward. When I approached, it was to make common cause with you, if I could not stop the tumult by my persuasions. My remarks had before only increased the clamour; and though I called on Durpsford to second me, unluckily they took his words the other way. I fear you were hurt at my conduct; and Mabel says that I joined in the outcry against you: if I did, it was unknowingly—not being as clear as I might have been. I have no cause to remember this night with pleasure; but if you are as generous and good-tempered as you were firm and daring, you will give me your hand and promise to forget it."

“Most readily, sir, as far as you are concerned,—nay, I am the more bound to you by this acknowledgment. I fear I was rash, or should not have misjudged your kindness,” replied the young man, grasping his offered hand, every vestige of resentment gone on the instant, for the squire’s frankness could not be withstood. “But there were others, sir—”

“—Who said what they should not,” interrupted the squire. “They shall apologise. As your host and friend, I shall insist on this. And now good night !” closing the door before Edward could reply.

Note.—In the present state of society, such scenes as the preceding cannot occur ; but at the period of this tale such scenes not only could, but actually did, occur, as might be proved by the testimony of those still living.

CHAPTER V.

It seemed as if Mabel had done her best to obey her father's command, to rise as fresh and as gay as a lark ; at least, so thought her father as he kissed her cheek, and gazed with delight on its bright tint of rose, as Edward entered the room. He did not observe that this delicate flushing was accompanied by a slight confusion, and that the eyes were more steadily fixed on the ground than they had been of late. Perhaps one reason why he did not perceive it was, that he too was not entirely free from embarrassment, though his greeting to his young guest was frank and cordial. Two influences were at war within him ;—that of former thoughts and habits, strengthened—represented, it might be said, by Durnsford ; and the better thoughts that had

arisen since his accident, and of which Edward Elton might be considered as the representative. Had he yielded completely to either, he might have been happier : halting between two principles, his conscience neither satisfied nor smothered, he knew no repose. The waverer is ever the most miserable and restless of men : he has neither the possession of the false peace of this world, nor the hope of the true peace of the next.

He did what many have tried to do before : he resolved to enter into a compromise for the present, and pursue a more decided course for the future. He would go to Merrick's—he must go there, for he had promised, though aware that the revel was certain to be carried to excess ; but he would come away early, on the plea of the money that he should have about him, and then he would live a quieter life. Durnsford would be gone, and he should be more with Mabel and Edward : the future should be more as they desired—as he believed was right.

The future ! And who is certain of a

future? Not mortal man! If we feel a habit sinful, why let it gather strength and power by continuance? Each act of compliance is a new sin; and that faith is worse than doubtful, which knowingly permits the infringement of God's law, salving the conscience with the promise of future amendment.

"So neither you nor the fair Mabel will fix a day to come to me?" said Mr. Durnsford to the squire, as they walked together in the grounds some time after breakfast, the visitor leading where he pleased.

"I am not inclined to leave home just at present," replied his host; adding with a rather embarrassed manner, "I am getting old, I believe, and must keep more to my own fire-side."

"Getting old!" remarked his companion incredulously. "So is Ranger," pointing to a fine young setter hunting the hedge-rows. "Philip Conyers, who led the hunt last spring, getting old, and sitting by his own fire-side! You are not afraid of another fall? Grown nervous like a fine lady? Your father did not

do so. 'If a man falls, let him mount again,' was his saying; yet he died quietly in his bed. I hope Horton has not been frightening you with any of his fancies: he is enough to make a woman of any man. Those doctors bring one into the world, and send two out. There is Balfour—you remember him down here with Barrett last year,—a fine, hale, hearty man, like yourself; could out do the youngsters, and drink his four bottles, yet none the worse. Three months since, he was ordered to give up hunting, and not drink more than two glasses after dinner. He is dying—that order will be the death of him: whatever a man is accustomed to do, that he should continue. When I saw him a month ago, he was looking like a ghost. I tried to persuade him to return to his old habits; reminding him that his father had lived to a good old age, and died beloved and respected. But it would not do: he was as weak as a child; said that he did not dare; and looked at the young man who is to marry his daughter, and come into his fortune, as though he was under his control, and feared to act con-

trary to his wishes. He is become the laughing stock of the whole county for these fancies ; and yielding to the vagaries of a young man, at his age, when he should know better. I could not laugh—I only pitied him !”

“ I am not afraid of acting contrary to Horton’s advice, when I think it wrong,” remarked the squire rather testily.

“ I did not seriously suppose that you were : you are not so weak as to be held in leading-strings by him or any one else.—Talking of leading-strings, when did young Elton return ? It is lucky he was not in the house when there was that uproar last night, some calling on him to come out ;—with his fiery temper, and the inability of several to defend themselves, there might have been more than one coroner’s inquest required. Well for all that he had not returned !”

“ He had returned ; but his room is at the other end of the house, and Mabel had made him promise not to quit it unless absolutely compelled to do so.”

“ You amaze me ! I should not have

thought that even Miss Conyers, though it is his wish and interest to gain her favour, could have won such a promise. I believed him to be one who absolutely spurned leading-strings for himself, however eager to impose them upon others ;—but our interest compels us to many things. How grand he looked last night, sweeping that large sword round him among his unarmed companions, who were merely in jest—a jest likely to have become a serious reality though !—There are some tempers that cannot brook a little innocent merriment ; they are too proud and overbearing to submit to what appears to lower their fancied dignity. Yet it is a fine bold young fellow, if he would but keep his bravery for more fitting occasions, and not make himself ridiculous by its injudicious display. It was a folly, or an insolence to those older than himself, to refuse the toast : had he drunk it quietly, all would have been well ; but no—he must make a riot and a bravado, and, on my word, I think some had a narrow escape with their lives. He did not tell Miss Conyers

what passed, I conclude, or her terror afterwards is fully accounted for."

"I do not know how much she heard, but enough to make her dread a second meeting. I am afraid there were many to blame, and only one to praise," remarked Mr. Conyers; but not with his wonted boldness, for he was again yielding to Durnsford's influence.

"Several to blame, certainly, if you choose to censure what was meant as a merry jest. A pretty tale he told your daughter, I have no doubt, with himself for the hero: I never knew any one who could tell a story better; there is a natural eloquence about him—a seeming frankness, which enables him to make the worse appear the better cause to all those who do not look beneath the surface. I wonder what he said of you and me? Nothing very handsome, I suspect, judging from your daughter's manner this morning, though we stood his friends. What is his father? The people round here have a strange fancy that he is a nephew of Hather's, the man I said he was

like when I first saw him—the son of his elder brother, that unhappy man who was tried for forgery, and only acquitted through the skilful roguery of his attorney !”

“ Impossible !” said the squire quickly.

“ So I told them ; but I have had to defend him several times. I wonder people will take such silly fancies into their heads, and not give them up either, though there is positive proof to the contrary. ‘ Would Philip Conyers keep him under his roof, treat him as a friend, and let him be always with his daughter, if he were the son of a forger ?’—was my question. ‘ I do not know,’ said some : ‘ the squire is too kind-hearted to be very penetrating ; and he is a clever young man, and I am much mistaken if he has not the length of his host’s foot.’—‘ Nonsense !’ I replied ; ‘ Philip Conyers is the kindest of human beings, but he is not a simpleton.’—‘ I cannot tell,’ remarked another : ‘ it was very strange his taking him up so suddenly :—he can wind the squire round his finger, and we shall hear of his marrying his daughter, and being made his heir. Who is he, pray, if he

is not the forger's son?"—"That is more than I can tell, but of course Conyers knows," said I.—Who is he, Philip? Tell me all about him, that I may contradict these foolish reports more boldly. It is a pity that they have mingled your daughter's name with them. I have asked him of his connexions once or twice; but he always turned the conversation, and would not own even a distant relationship to any of the different families of the name of Elton who were named to him; and others, I find, say just the same: the universal question seems to be—Who is he?"

"He is a fine young fellow, and a capital rider," said the squire sharply, with strong symptoms of vexation.

"That is what he is, and not who he is."

"I never asked," replied the squire doggedly, finding that he must give an explicit answer. "I was not going to marry him; nor was I afraid that he would cheat me," he added, as if by way of averting the blame which he fancied coming.

It failed in its purpose—out came the cen-

sure, and Mr. Conyers felt it more from a consciousness of deserving it. With a young, lovely, and motherless daughter, he was bound to have made inquiries before admitting a young man like Edward Elton to all the privileges of a friend known from childhood.

“Good heavens, Conyers! Do you mean to say that you have let the young man remain in your house an honoured guest for so many months, in perfect ignorance of his character and connexions? I could not have believed this possible, and positively contradicted the report when some of your old friends indulged in smiles at your credulity. Do you really know nothing of his connexions?”

“Nothing,” answered the squire, employing himself vigorously in cutting off a thistle-head with his walking-stick. “I tell you again, I was not going to marry the young man.”

“But the young man may be going to marry your daughter.”

“Marry my daughter!” repeated the squire, looking up in amaze, as if the possibility of such an occurrence had never entered his imagination.

“Psha ! Durnsford, you are always suspecting something. The young man would have told me of his family when first he came, but I did not wish to hear. His father is a very good sort of man, I dare say : and as for thinking of marrying Mabel, I will answer for it that such a thought never came into either of their heads. He is too honourable, and she is too shy.”

“I know nothing about his honour ; but I am older than he is, and even I feel that Miss Conyers would be no mean temptation to make me forget that the father might not approve of my suit as much as the young lady herself. We are old friends, Philip ; and whilst others have changed, we have been the same, never having had even a disagreement : if it were otherwise, I should not venture to speak as I do ; but I feel your interest as my own,” placing his hand caressingly on the squire’s shoulder.

“I know all this ; — say what you please,” remarked Mr. Conyers, much affected.

“Thank you, Philip, for this liberty. You

will pardon me if I tell unpleasant truths ; but I have the happiness of yourself and gentle daughter much at heart, and fear both have been perilled : you are too good and kind yourself to have a suspicion of others. I do not wish to say anything harsh of this young man ; but indeed you have been imprudent to encourage such an intimacy between him and Miss Conyers. You fancy he has no other feeling towards your daughter than esteem : now, if I know the symptoms, he is a lover—and what is more, by no means a hopeless one ;—he as surely expects to be your son-in-law as does Sir Thomas Barrett.”

“ Nonsense !” replied the squire angrily ; “ he cannot have so much presumption. He could not suppose that the daughter of Philip Conyers, one of an ancient and honourable family—perhaps heiress of the Grange,”—and his voice faltered as he said this,—“ would wed with a nameless youth, who, by his own showing, has his fortune to make :—nor could he suppose, if he won the girl’s consent, that the

father would be so yielding. The young man has too much spirit and honour for that."

"You do not make allowance for the greatness of the temptation, and will find you have been deceived. To gain a lovely bride, a kind father, and a good fortune at one stroke! where is the young man without birth or riches who could withstand making the attempt, if possessing powers likely to command success? And such powers no one can deny Edward Elton. I scarcely know how to blame him, though he should have been withheld by gratitude to you;—but then Mabel is very charming, and a fortune by marriage more pleasantly acquired than by toiling day after day at the desk or the counter. Who would not rather live at the Grange, with hunters at command, and the lovely Mabel to smile upon him, than weigh out soap and tallow, draw invoices, or add up bills! You still look incredulous; but only just think over their conduct, and then admit that I am right. Is he ever from her side when with any tolerable pro-

does not admire? Does either
thing without looking at the other
thy? Why, their eyes meet a time
a day. Does she fear anything which he proposes
or decline anything which he proposes
yet you doubt his views, and the
has acquired. Does not she call him
—a stranger, unknown six months
not her voice soft as the sigh of
breeze when she speaks to him? Does
he call her 'Mabel'? and are not his words
like the gentle murmur of the sea
when he addresses her? And does
wander forth into the woods and
does not her arm rest on his, some
the timidity of unassured, sometimes
trust of assured affection? These
customs of our time."

calling each other ‘ Mr. Elton’ and ‘ Miss Conyers,’ after they had been living together for weeks, thinking only of nursing and amusing me,—he as though he had been my son,—that I bade them be more like brother and sister. You see too much.”

The squire’s manner did not show so plainly as his words the certainty that Durnsford saw more than existed :—it was evident that he was arguing against a growing and displeasing conviction.

“ Brother and sister !” repeated Mr. Durnsford with a smile at his friend’s simplicity, by no means welcome to that friend. “ Depend upon it, if ever Edward Elton thought of being your son, he never contemplated having the lovely Mabel as a sister. You doubt still ?—why, the whole neighbourhood rings with it ! Sir Thomas Barrett is too generous to be jealous, and has too just a reliance on your honour to doubt your keeping your word ; but even he, I hear, has been hurt at the reports. For myself, I firmly believed, till you assured me to the contrary, either that you knew every

design, it would be but love's law
am shocked to think how your
hospitality may have misled you
but awaken you to a sense of the
allowing him to be constantly with
ter, the mischief might be avert
fancy for an adventurer, however
might be soon got over ; but long
may deepen it into a feeling."

"Do you think, then, that he is
perering with Mabel's affections?
loves him?" inquired the squire.

"Of the first I have little doubt
you are the best judge. If she re
the attentions of Sir Thomas, it
that she is not under the influ
young stranger, who fancies that
all persons and all circumstances

“As for the baronet’s attentions, I am not certain that they have been very lover-like. To be sure, he looks enough at her; but she never seems to know it; and last night, when I named the subject, she was in such a fright, and trembled and sobbed so piteously, begging me not to force her to marry him, that I was obliged to promise to let the matter rest for the present. I thought it was only her shyness; and I still hope that it is no more.”

“Her shyness! You attribute too much to that. Shyness never prevents a woman from being in love, though it may her being a flirt, or openly showing her regard. Besides, I find her much altered since I was last here: she is fast passing from the lovely, yielding girl, into the beautiful, decided woman. She is learning to have a will of her own; and that will is, at present, to please Elton in all things. If she sobbed so violently at the mere proposal of Sir Thomas, rest assured that that sobbing had to do with some stronger feeling than mere shyness. Did she mention Mr. Elton’s name last night?”

him promise not to leave his room, me to go and apologise. What a been not to see this!—if it is really cannot believe it: Edward would not dishonour, or Mabel with deceit,” squire, unwilling to credit evil of loved, or to imagine what would plans.

“As for honour, all have not you delicate feelings. He may preter misunderstood your words—‘I wish a son.’ You must not expect the principles from a nobody, with his seek, as from a gentleman of ancient. He may make a thousand excuses: think you would object—he loved was aware—he hoped to acquire for felt that her affections were his he

win your consent ; — or he thought that you must have seen his feelings, and did not disapprove. Trust me that he will be at no loss for excuses. I never knew one better able to defend any cause, however desperate. The plain matter of fact, that, knowing his poverty — setting aside his birth — he should not have abused your unsuspecting hospitality by winning your daughter's affections, but should have left the house the moment he saw the remotest possibility of such an occurrence, or stated his feelings, leaving you to decide, will be so glossed over and smothered by his eloquence as to be entirely lost sight of. Nay, such are his powers, and the influence he exerts, or endeavours to exert, over most, that if you have a talk with him, I should not wonder if he persuaded you to believe him the most honourable of youths—the fittest husband for Miss Conyers,—and myself the most deceitful and slanderous of men, merely for having seen what it was not intended I should see, and for having presumed to warn an old and valued friend.”

“ No ! I am not such a fool as that !—though

alone in the error. My servant
the villagers believe it is to be
say he has determined what alter
when the Grange shall be his, and
Mr. Astell as his model. Mind
for the truth of this, nor for
further — namely, that Martha
connived at it out of spite to
always blames for poor Philip's
I remember you told me that she
him and your daughter, and it
not revealing what she had pre-
tell. What connexion can there
them? I have sometimes done
that haughty woman's early conduct
strict examination. You have mentioned
you said, to the young man's
might endeavor to . . .

ger, brother to the man who cheated you ; but there is no positive certainty on the point. The resemblance to his uncle has been seen by several ; and it is said that Hather has been living for some years in a very secluded part of ——shire."

"Ha ! that is the part of the country from whence he came ; and he owned to living a lonely life with his father, never seeing any one," exclaimed the squire, striking his stick deep into the ground in the impulse of his anger. "That seems a confirmation. It is not fair to judge people on such trifles, but do you remember one day at dinner his declaiming on the unjust severity of the laws against forgery, and insisting that their cruelty, as he termed it, should be softened ?"

"Very likely, though I do not recollect it ; but if Hather's son, it is very probable ;—only a villain of a lawyer saved him."

Some might think that prudence and policy would have forbidden the subject to a clever, scheming young man, aware of his father's crime ; but the honest squire knew nothing of

...p, for his uncle was an ac-
observed Mr. Durnsford. "I
the letter he received yesterday
contents seemed to perplex him.

"I know that he had a letter-
But it cannot be as you say—it
that I should have been so de-
ask him of his father and his view

"And he will deny or exten-
gratitude, appeal to your gene-
and look very sad: Mabel will
her tears, and Philip Conyers w
either into a sympathy with the
givenness to the contrite pair at
Gretna."

"No such thing! — you do n
exclaimed the squire, wrought to
companion's sneers. "I will —"

“ I did not mean to vex you, Philip ;—but I will tell you what you can do more. Give the young man a civil dismissal by letter, saying that since such reports exist, it will be best for all parties that he should depart, your daughter being engaged to Sir Thomas Barrett : add every good wish, and a present, if you desire it ; though Fury has paid him enough for enjoying your hospitality whilst occasionally visiting your sick-room. Do not be harsh ! He has many good points—the temptation was great, and you a little to blame in not making inquiries. Above all, pointedly decline an interview ; and give no intimation of this to Miss Conyers,—that is, unless you have more taste for tears and entreaties than I have. I would rather encounter a mad dog than a weeping woman ; though, to be sure, those tears injure no one, but dry up as April showers, and the sun shines out again. Send your daughter to-morrow to pay her long-promised visit to the Dowager Lady Barrett—have the note delivered as soon as you have started for Merrick’s, and the

or hospitable," said the squire :
ment's consideration. " I should
save me trouble ; but the young
ways been respectful and attentive,
complain of being turned out of the
not heard in his defence, when I had
pressed him to stay."

" I admire your high feeling, but
too scrupulous, Philip. If there is
doubt of his having sought to win
ter's love, it would be different ; but
could have caused Miss Conyers
Barrett's proposal, when all the gentry
the county would jump to have him
come forward boldly and avowed
you might have acted otherwise. I
ask the fox for his defence, before

taste for fowls and turkeys—you see him beside your hen-house, and you do not stay the hounds to call a jury or listen to a parley. You do no wrong to this young man—you only decline a further acquaintance which could bring little pleasure to either.”

“ I don’t know—” said the squire, still hesitating ; “ I am loth to send him away without an explanation :—he deserves a reproof, or no dismissal.”

“ *I* am not fond of giving reproofs, and am too decided myself to recommend delay or vacillation in others,” remarked Mr. Durnsford with what his companion interpreted into a sneer at his weakness.

“ I do not like reproof or vacillation any more than yourself,” replied the squire angrily, his temper waxing warmer every moment. “ If I knew—if I were but quite certain that he had made love to the girl, I would—” Here Mr. Conyers paused, striking his stick again into the earth too firmly to be removed without a violent effort.

“ There is proof before you, then,—that is,

ask her to grant him a private interview. To know she declined coming with him, and that there they are together ! You can see their features, and certainly no words ; but only mark their manner as they look at each other, and then doubt longer. See ! they are at the top of the ascent. He has just got over the stile, and is standing to assist her ;—she places her hand in his, with a little maidenly hesitation, and springs down to the ground ;—she requires his assistance no more, but the hand is still retained. He makes a faint show to withdraw it, yet allows it to linger in his ;—now he looks into her face—now he speaks and listens for a hurried answer ; — it is spoken !—both are now held in his — and there they stand

he has resigned her hands—but not till she has spoken ; — he has drawn her arm within his, and there it rests with a love-like mingling of trust and timidity. There is many a secret thought revealed by the resting of a hand upon an arm. The tale of love has been told,—and not frowned on either !”

“ Villain ! he shall rue this day !” exclaimed the squire, springing forward, fired to fiercer wrath by the vivid description of his companion, who himself appeared highly excited.

“ Stop !” cried Durnsford, laying a strong grasp on his arm, and drawing him behind a small thicket, close to which they had been standing,—“ Stop ! they come this way : —if you rush out now, they may escape you—or you will be breathed up the ascent, and unable to speak. Wait till they come near ; —and then — out upon them !” — Durnsford relaxed not his hold ; but the squire ceased his struggles, convinced of the wisdom of the advice, though his fury could ill brook the restraint. There he stood behind the little hawthorn brake, his eyes gleaming on the advancing cou-

ple, who were too much engrossed with each other to see him through the branches—his hands clenched—his teeth pressed tightly on his lips, lest his wrath should forth before the fitting time,—a wrath increasing every moment, as the movements of those he watched were pointed out in a hissing whisper by his companion, who showed an unusual violence of emotion. When that wrath so hardly restrained should burst forth, it would be fearful. The fury of a generally good-tempered man is awful: it is like one of the fearful storms in the beautiful islands of the West. Such storms are rare; but when they come, they leave terror, and desolation, and despair behind them.

The field in which the squire and his friend were standing shelved deeply down from either side into the centre, through which ran a little stream gurgling over its pebbly bed, and fringed with flowers of a thousand dyes.

How the young heart loves the beauty of the flowers that bloom in our fields and beside our streams, filling the air with fragrance, and the earth with loveliness!—and all without

our care or culture!—making an Eden round us—springing up in our path, ere we have wearied ourselves by seeking for them, like unexpected pleasures—deeds of love from those in whom we had not looked for them, or the joys of the young and hoping heart ere palled to satiety or worn down by disappointment. Beautiful things! that we love the more, to atone in our own minds for having left them to come to their gentle glory unlooked to and uncared for.

Let who will keep their jewels and their gauds; give me the flowers of my native woods! those woods themselves in all their dreamy beauty. Let who will listen to those magic sounds—

“The witching words of flattery,
The music and the mirth of revelry;”

give me the gentle rustling of the forest boughs, the murmur of the crystal stream, the gladsome song of birds. Give these again! and then—Alas! what then, if you give not back with these the feelings and the hopes of early youth? And those you cannot give!

“The heart can know no second spring.”

— a few young oaks and elms
behind one of these lea-
squire and his companion
and Edward were desce-
the other side of the ri-
watched were in shadow ; b-
in all its brightness on th-
which the lovers passed by
path :—round them it was a
shadow, not a cloud. Love
hopeful lovers too. Mr. Dun-
the truth — no matter how l-
tale of love had been told —
not been frowned on. The
ledgment had been made ; a-
cussing the future, as the you-
are wont to discuss it. So
their homes —

unclouded day. Alas for the beautiful dreams of the young! the dewy gems of the morning hour!—ere life is at its noon, they have melted away, and are no more seen.

“Nay, Mabel! my own gentle Mabel!—for none shall part us,—this is but the whispering of your timidity: your father cannot have been blind to my love, though my lips told it not. I wish now that I had not heeded the black dame’s advice; but she knew so much of the past, I thought she might judge of the future:—and Mr. Durnsford’s presence, that, I knew not how, seemed to keep us apart, with your father’s fancied coldness, combined to render me silent. He shall know all to-day.”

They had now reached the foot of the steep descent, and were standing beside the little stream, just where a broad plank with a light rough rail formed a bridge across its gurgling waters.

“Let us linger here a moment,” said Mabel, as they stood on the plank, looking down into the clear stream with its glittering pebbles. “See, how it dances on—so clear, so bright—

whilst the flowers bend down to meet its waters, dimpling into mimic waves. Does it not look all hope, and joy, and happiness? Is it not beautiful?"

"Not half so beautiful as you, my own sweet Mabel," replied the happy lover, who had no eye or thought for aught beside.

"Yes, far more beautiful,—I would not have you flatter," said the blushing girl, bending lower over the rippling stream. "See! all is so bright—so happy!"

"Yes, all is bright and happy; but nought so bright as you—so happy as myself. Turn not from me, Mabel! Are you not to me the brightness of this life?—its beauty, and its glory? The heart will wither in your absence; and yet I fear that I must leave you."

"Leave me? I thought you said—"

"Then you would grieve, my Mabel, if I left you?—yet not as I should grieve. I was sad and restless, longing for something, yet I knew not what: but now I know,—I only pined to have the visions of my youth fulfilled—the lovely dreams that haunted me by night and

day embodied in a fairer form than even the brightest vision that beguiled me. Now I have found a happiness of which I never dreamt—no thought could shadow forth its semblance. I pine no longer for the world, its gauds, its glories, or its strife: I would my life should be one never-ending dream of love;—I would be with you ever,—your presence makes it day, your absence gloom. Nay, chide me not,—I am no flatterer; and if you think me so, then I shall say it is because you do not feel as I would have you feel. I would that you too counted time, not as the crowd compute, but by my being with you, or away.”

“Are not these words idle flatteries indeed? Who bids you go?”

“I have a father—” and he looked a little less triumphantly.

“And he will think that Mabel Conyers is too simple and too—”

“Not so, my Mabel,” interrupting her.
“Look not so timid and so pale: it is I that am no fitting mate for you. I would that I had rank and wealth, to lay them at your feet

to do you honour. I do not heed them for myself alone;—and you—you said you cared not for these things. Heaven has given me health and strength;—why may not I, as others, win both gold and honour? With such a guerdon as your love, what may I not achieve?”

“And your father will not—”

“—Will not what, sweet one? He cannot frown on you. I would but urge my suit in person—circumstances make it more expedient.”

“I would not pain you by my questions, but your look is troubled when you name your father: and that letter yesterday—forgive me, it is not idle curiosity—I fear—”

“Fear nothing! there has been some mistake, but a few words will set all right. I fear nothing—see no obstacle! I may not have much gold, though Martha Wilford promised wealth; but I am honoured by your father’s friendship, and he has said that he regards me as his son. Will he then refuse to give his daughter to me? Or if at first he should look coldly on our love, will you not join your prayers to mine? Could he resist those gentle

tones — that pleading look ? You are too timid and too fearful !” — for Mabel did look doubtful, remembering the proposal of Sir Thomas Barrett. “Have I not heard those precious words—‘I love !’ How then can I know doubt or fear ? those words are as a spell to charm all evil into good. If our fathers have been disunited, we will join them ; if they have jarred, our love shall soothe them into harmony. I would look once again into those downcast eyes—I would hear once more those precious words. Nay, Mabel, say you love me once—but once again !”

Before she could reply, his arm was thrown suddenly round her, and she felt herself held to his heart, as with a bound he cleared the little bridge on which they had been lingering, and stood in safety with his precious burden on the other side of the stream.

“Villain ! how dare you !” shouted a furious voice beside him ; whilst the terrified Mabel was torn so rudely from his arms, that the young man reeled with the sudden shock.

“How dare you fling your arm around my

child !” exclaimed the wrathful father, his lips livid with the rage so long restrained, one hand clenched and thrust threateningly in Edward’s face, whilst his other arm supported his fainting child.

“Look ! there is my excuse !” replied the young man, recovering from his surprise, his cheek crimsoned at the insult, his own hand involuntarily clenching to oppose the one thrust out towards him.

Even as he spoke, a young bull, goaded almost to madness by the teasing of some boys at the other end of the field and the attacks of the flies, came crashing down through the thickets directly to the spot where the lovers had stood not a minute before, his bellowing resounding far and near—his tail lashing his sides. On he rushed, splashing, scrambling, partly on the narrow bridge, partly in the silver stream, then up the opposite ascent, till, breathless and exhausted, he sank on the earth, his tongue hanging out — a glare over his bloodshot eye. He passed just where the youthful pair had stood. Edward’s quick eye

had seen the danger but just in time;—his promptness alone had saved them both, not perhaps from death, but from imminent peril.

Mabel shuddered in her father's arms, as the wild animal passed where she had been; and the father's threatening hand sank by his side, as he admitted the peril of his child. Yet the storm of his wrath was but slightly allayed, and there was still that in his manner to justify the young man's flashing eye. Mr. Durnsford stood rather apart, without speech or motion, save that his hand clenched and unclenched alternately, and that the expression of his features had a stronger character than usual: but the others were too much engaged to think of him.

For some moments the father and the lover stood gazing at each other in silence; and then the former spoke abruptly and fiercely, though he tendered thanks. "I thank you for the service done my child, and am content that it should stand as an acquittal for the wrong you would have done to me. I will forget that, but for your shameful dalliance with the girl, she might have seen her danger, and have step-

ped aside, without the resting in your arms. Depart in peace ! — let us meet no more !”

“What do you mean, sir ? Shameful dalliance ! What am I to understand ?” inquired Edward with a quivering lip, his high spirit rising at the insult—his eye flashing back the angry glance of his accuser.

“Mean ! I thought my words were clear enough to any who would understand.”

“You spoke of shameful dalliance, sir.”

“I did,” said the squire, interrupting him, his wrath increasing as he gave it vent. “I did, and I repeat the words:—Shameful dalliance!—shameful in her, who is affianced to another;—shameful in you, a beggar!—son of a low-born convict!—or of one who should have been.—Stop, young man, and hear me out ! I heed not your fiery glance or your clenched fist:—you asked my meaning, and you shall have it. I bid you go, before I call my servants to enforce the order. Your goods, too precious to be left, shall be sent safe to Wex-
ton. Go ! ere I lay hands upon the villain who smiled but to betray—who fawned but to

deceive. Begone, for your own sake, lest I expose you to others."

"Pardon me, sir, but I go not without some explanation of your words, or their recall," replied the young man, striving to speak with respect and calmness, though with difficulty restraining his indignation. "Had any other used those words, I should have given a briefer answer; but as Miss Conyers's father, I would bear much from you."

"You are too kind! Miss Conyers should be very thankful, and her father very grateful," returned the squire scornfully. "You will bear much, you say—you have borne much already. The name of villain! humbly, meekly borne it! Perhaps you would bear a blow," again upraising his clenched hand.

"No, sir!" replied the young man firmly, maintaining his ground without shrinking, though cheek and lip were pallid with the intenseness of his agony,—“No, sir! I would not bear a blow, even from you; the arm should be caught ere it fell:—nor will I brook in silence to be branded as a villain. I de-

mand an explanation, and Mr. Conyers is not one to deny it ;—he is too honourable to slander without a fancied cause—too generous to condemn unheard. There must have been some misunderstanding—or the meddling of a foe,” glancing at Durnsford.

“ Some misunderstanding !” shouted the squire in his wrath. “ Where and how has there been misunderstanding ? Am I deaf, that I cannot hear ?—am I blind, that I cannot see ? Will you deny that you talked of love to my child ? that you strove to win hers in return ? Will you deny that I saw you toying with her hand ? that I heard you whisper in her ear ? that you prayed her to repeat the words of love ? Deny this, and I call you liar !—admit it, and I call you villain !”

“ You do me wrong, sir ; I am neither. I do not deny much of that with which you charge me : I love your daughter,—I prize her love above all that the world has else, save my own honour. I know not what you heard of our discourse, but you might have learnt that it was my wish, my resolve, to tell you all ;

whilst I regretted having allowed any circumstance to delay a full disclosure of my hopes ; and if I named not those hopes to you, I named them not to your daughter,—I was the same in your presence as in your absence. Not till last night did I tell my love ; not till to-day did I hear from your daughter's lips that my love was returned ; and it was my purpose ere evening closed to sue to you for the richest boon that earth contains. The kindness you have shown, the regard—”

“ So you will bring that very kindness and regard which you have outraged, as a charge against me !” exclaimed the squire, interrupting him impatiently. “ You will lay the blame on me, that I never saw what you never wished that I should see,—you would throw off the charge of deceit from yourself to lay it upon me. Is not this deeper villany ?—Ay, villany ? What need of mincing words ? What is it else, to have sat at my board—to have drunk of my cup—to have spoken to me as a friend, and all the while to have been blinding the father to undo the daughter ?—Yes, undo !

Would it not be undoing to wed with a nameless beggar like yourself? Where is the home that you would take her to?"

"I have not riches, sir, I own: but I am young—might win them, or——"

"Perhaps I should not heed so mere a trifle," interrupted the squire, far too furious to hear in patience. "Or, better still, Martha Wilford will give you the wealth she predicted, though she never found it herself. Will she give birth too?—honourable birth? Take the shame from your father's name, and bestow rank and wealth, like the witches of old? And so you sold yourself to her, body and soul, for the hope,—leagued with her, and would not tell your love, nor the fortune she predicted, because she bade you not! And I and my child are to be the victims of her hate—for she does hate us both. And you thought, forsooth, when you asked to be my son, that if I looked grave at first, I should afterwards bow to your rule;—that you could persuade me to anything—that I should yield to your eloquence, or Mabel's tears. You are mistaken! I have

been blind for a time ;—but I see now. I am not quite the fool you took me for. The nameless beggar ! the son of the base ! shall not wed with a Conyers ! You would win the daughter without the father's leave ;—is not this villany ? I call it so — but then I am a plain-spoken man.”

“ If you call it villany, sir, that, being poor, I have presumed to love your daughter ;—that, being without a title, I have wooed her before your face ; never veiling my admiration—never seeking a private meeting ; never saying, when you sent me out day after day as her protector, what I would not that you should have heard :—if you call this villany, then am I a villain !—if not, I claim that the word shall be recalled. You knew my poverty :—ask your daughter if I ever failed in respect—if I ever, till last night, pleaded my love. I admit the folly of placing any reliance on the predictions of that singular woman, to whom I went only at your desire ; I am not leagued with her—I can scarcely regard her as a friend ; yet her knowledge of the past is wonderful. If you

charge my love as a crime, then am I guilty : but I sought not the trial :—I came at your bidding — I stayed at your entreaty. You would not let me depart. Was it villany to stay when the father would not let me go ;—to love the gentlest, and the fairest, and the best, when he bade us be together, week following week, in the gloom of the sick chamber, in the brightness of the summer sun ? Even you must acquit me. I have but little wealth, for false friends robbed my father of his gold : I have no rank to boast, but I come of an ancient and honourable family. I know not from whom you heard of my father's wrongs ; I told them not, and the tale, whoever told it, has been perverted. If shame rest on my mother,—and I will still disbelieve it,—there is no stain on my father's fame."

"Ha ! shame rest on your mother too !—then there is double shame : and yet you sought my child ! Out of my sight !"

"No shame rests on my birth," replied the young man, his own temper waxing warmer at the growing wrath of his accuser. "If my

mother erred, it was after my birth ; and again I say that there is no stain on my father's fame."

"And again I say that there is !" shouted the squire. "Why else is he living lonely, far away from his former friends ? Answer me that if you can !"

"He has suffered wrong from men, and fears to trust them again," replied the young man, a little less proudly, so strange was the squire's present knowledge, considering his former professed ignorance of any one of the name of Elton.

"Wrongs !" cried the squire scornfully. "Yes, the thief holds himself wronged by the officer who takes him ; the forger, by the jury who try him."

"Thief!—forger ! What mean you, sir ?"

"I mean what I say, young man : — well if others did the same ! He who would defraud another, is a thief ; and, if report speaks true, your father knows too well the meaning of the words : he has been taken by the officer—tried by the jury."

“It is false!” exclaimed the young man passionately.

“Prove it so! Who are your relatives? Where did your father formerly reside?”

“I know not,” faltered the son, seeing how far the admission would tell against him. “But I would stake my honour upon his,” he added proudly.

“Stake something of more worth, if you would clear his fame.—What does your letter say? Will not that prove his honour? May we not see it?”

“For months have I been your honoured guest. Am I now to be mocked? baited, as the generous would think it shame to bait the vilest on the earth? Shame on you, sir! You should have spared the father, if you would not spare the son. I will not show the letter,” he continued, goaded almost to madness by such continued insults; “I will not submit to the sneers of the heartless, the pangs of a wounded spirit. But one thing that the letter says I will repeat. It bids me shun all of the name of Conyers, as I would shun a pestilence.”

There is pollution in their presence ! It calls Philip Conyers one whom none should trust ! whom honest men should dread ! I gave no credit to the tale before,—I should believe it now.”

“ Ha, young sir ! Dares he fling shame on me, when it clings round himself, and cannot be thrown off ? ”

“ I tell you, Mr. Conyers, there is no shame on him ; and he who says it, says a lie ! But lately you knew no one of the name of Elton—since when, then, have you known my father ? ”

“ Need a man always bear the same address ? A change of name may be as prudent as a change of residence. If I never knew your father, how could I have wronged him ? He counselled wisely—shun the race of Conyers.”

For some moments Edward was silent ; for a fearful doubt came over him. His father owned no relative—held intercourse with none ; and he had seen initials on a seal which ill accorded with his present name. Could the charge, then, be true ? His head sank on his breast—a cold dew stood on his brow :—he

that the charge was false. He w
the momentary doubt still more
the accusation. He looked up,
stern gaze of Mr. Conyers withou

“ That my father may have b
former days—that he may have
your hands, is no proof of that
As a son, I claim to know the
him ; and as a son, his consta
and pupil, I deny that a stain can
honour. Will you retract the ch

“ No ! I repeat it ! ”

“ And I deny it ! ”

“ Denial is not proof, however
The world says that your father
his life was saved by gold and ro

“ The world lies !—and he is

“ You dare not, sir !”

“ I dare not, villain ?”

“ I am no villain.”

“ Hush ! hush !—in pity hush !” exclaimed the wretched Mabel, who, too faint to speak before, now interposed. “ Oh, speak not thus, if you would have me live !”

The father and the lover listened to those low, soft tones, that won a hearing amid the storm of passion by their very sweetness. They looked on the deathly cheek, and there was a brief silence. “ Go !” said Mr. Conyers sternly. “ Let us meet no more ; and I forgive the past.”

The young man started : his thoughts had been with Mabel.

“ Your pardon, sir : but we must meet again ;—my father’s honour shall be cleared. It is I that should forgive.”

“ Begone ! before I speak my curse upon your head—the parent’s curse for bringing sorrow on his child. Go ! go !” stamping with impatience.

“ Go ! do go now ! if only for my sake,”

less—me and mine ?”

“ I do,” said Mabel fervently.

“ Will you believe it still, when I am away ?”

“ Now and ever.”

“ Heaven bless you for those kisses they will be ever with me. Farewell, we shall soon meet again.” Then, with sternness, “ I go, Mr. Conyers ; not your threats, but that I will not part the child—I go to my father. I do not now to retract your words ; but with the means of clearing his fault shall not then vainly appeal to you to withdraw them. Your cruel insult—— But for the present let them stand. To-morrow shall have closed, you

Bring proof of your father's innocence—of your own unblemished descent from an ancient and honourable race, and Philip Conyers will give you his daughter," exclaimed the squire, fully convinced of the truth of the charges made.

"I accept the promise, though made in scorn," replied the youth with a flushed cheek.

"And I abide by it, if you claim its fulfilment within three months," repeated the squire with a taunting laugh.

"Enough, sir! Mabel Conyers will be mine!"

The glow of triumph faded from his cheek as suddenly as it had come, when he looked on the fainting girl, whose eyes were turned on him in pleading and in sorrow. He would have approached her—he would have spoken, but Mr. Conyers waved his hand impatiently.

"Away! no further parley till you claim my promise."

"Go, in silence and in peace!" said Mabel softly.

For another moment his gaze was fixed on her; then, waving his hand as in farewell, he

turned abruptly away, re-crossed the little bridge, and hastily climbed the steep down which he had so lately passed with that fair creature clinging to his arm. What were his feelings then? what were they now? How brief a space of time can cloud our hopes!—how swift is change!

Half raising herself from her father's arm, Mabel looked on Edward, till, springing over the stile, he was lost to her view. Mr. Conyers noted a slight shudder, as, reaching the top of the ascent, he turned towards her for an instant; and when he was no longer seen, with a deep sigh, as though she had held her breath to listen to his last step, she fell back into her father's arms, pale, cold, and senseless.

CHAPTER VI.

MR. CONYERS knew not till he saw his child lying in his arms with the semblance of death how much he loved her—how she had twined round his heart with her gentle and loving cares in the weary hours of sickness. It was the first time in his life that he had seen any one faint; and when no colour came in her cheek—no word from her pallid lip, and her eyes unclosed not at his affectionate entreaties, he believed that her spirit had passed away in the shock, and reproaching himself with the incoherence of a madman, he called on Edward to return, promising to give him his child if he would but restore her to life.

But Edward was out of sight and hearing—with feelings little more sane, hasting he knew—he cared not whither, so that he was in mo-

tion, and leaving the scene of insult and of wrong.

Mr. Durnsford's judicious advice and friendly soothing soon set all things in fairer order. Mabel was carried into the house, and gradually recovered consciousness, though she continued too faint to leave her room. Her father pressed her hand and kissed her cheek as he left her to the care of her maid, but, by Durnsford's advice, avoided all allusion to the past. She returned the pressure of his hand, but was too languid to do more.

To the great vexation of host and guest, Mr. Durnsford was obliged to leave the Grange that afternoon, to fulfil a previous engagement; but he lingered to the latest possible moment, and on departing promised to return within the week.

When satisfied that his child's insensibility was but temporary, the squire's wrath against Edward Elton returned with something of its former violence, and was scarcely abated during Durnsford's stay, with whom he talked over the late contention, more and more confirmed

in his belief that the young man whom he had honoured for so long was the son of the forger Hather : but when his friend departed, with him too appeared to vanish some of his wrathful feeling. The time passed slowly and heavily away : he looked to the seats where his child and his young guest had so lately sat, smiling on him in their happiness, and he sighed to think how that child was now in sadness and in sorrow ; and instead of blaming the youth as the cause, as he had done before, he began to make excuses for him, — to doubt if he had been so much in fault, or acquainted with his father's guilt, and even to suspect that he had himself been more violent than the occasion warranted. Perhaps the solitary evening accomplished more in Edward's favour than the most elaborate measures could have effected : it showed his value by the contrast of his absence ; and gave the squire time and opportunity to enumerate his many agreeable and estimable qualities, and to think how often both had been employed in his service or amusement. Thoroughly weary of solitude, Mr. Conyers retired early to

rest, though not for some hours to sleep, and rose betimes, eager to hear of Mabel's health, and resolved, should the young man return with proofs of his father's honour before three months had passed, and his child's heart be really set on the match, to keep his promise made in scorn. The tempest of rage had subsided, almost as suddenly as it had arisen: there was scarcely any of the leaven of malice in his disposition:—he was never sullen—with him the sun shone out as soon as the hail had descended.

Mabel joined him at breakfast—answered all his questions gently and affectionately—said she was better—shed no tears, and tried to smile upon him as before; but she trembled as he spoke—started at every sound, even the loud breathing of the dogs upon the hearth—ate nothing, though she let him heap her plate, and was so weak and languid that she could scarcely raise her cup. Her father looked at her in alarm; for she was little less death-like than when lying in his arms the day before.

Tears could always turn him ; but to see Mabel as she was, or had been, was a thousand times more subduing—it was so like death that he feared to make the likeness a reality.

A gentleman came on business before breakfast was concluded, which prevented his proving the power of soothing words to recall life to the eye and colour to the cheek.

“I cannot bear to see you thus—you must smile upon me, Mabel,” said her father on his return.

He had entered the room unnoticed by his daughter, who was sitting as he had left her, languid and abstracted. She looked up and tried to obey him ; but the word and the smile came not at her bidding, and he saw that his address had startled her.

“What do you wish, my child?” he asked, placing himself beside her, and drawing her towards him.

She was silent, trembling still more.

“What will you, Mabel?” he repeated with increasing earnestness. “Do not fear to speak.”

“Forgive—oh, forgive me and him!” she faltered, looking into his face for one brief instant.

“I do, my child—I do!”

“Heaven bless you!” flinging her arms round his neck, and sobbing on his shoulder.

They were the first tears which she had shed—they were the lightening of a weight that had pressed heavy on her senses. But if a great relief to her, they were but a slight one to her father.

“Hush! hush, Mabel! don’t sob so piteously. What can I do more? He has engaged to come and claim you. Let him come, and I will not say him nay. Perhaps I was rash, and he was warm—young blood is ever hot. Come, come, Mabel, look up, and smile on your fond father, who did not know till yesterday how much he loved you, or the poor lad either: I missed him sadly after Durnsford went, and began to think I had been hard upon him. If he loves you as he should, and told the truth, he will soon be

back ; and you must smile upon me doubly till he come."

He kissed her, and she smiled upon him as he wished, twining her arms more fondly round him.

The trampling of a horse and the sound of many voices came from below. The squire rose to inquire the cause of the commotion, but, instead of speaking from the window to allay it, left the room in evident vexation. A name distinguished amid the confusion of tongues caused Mabel also to rise and look from the window ; but she saw only the tail of Fury as they were leading him round to the stables. She knew that the horse had been sent with Elton's clothes to Wexton the preceding evening, and his return caused her fresh alarms, not dispelled by her father's look when he re-entered the room.

"What has happened?" she inquired anxiously, not finding him inclined to speak.

"Nothing alarming—so do not weep and tremble," he replied a little sharply. "I sup-

pose you guess something of the truth, though I made the talkers disperse instead of prating under the window, worrying you. The silly boy has returned Fury, and all his trappings, with no very courteous message—‘He will take nothing at my hands, and the time may come when I shall repent.’ I believed him forgiving, though high-spirited ; and thought that if young blood boiled the sooner, it also cooled the sooner.”

“Believe so still, dear father—I will be his surety.”

“Have a care, Mabel ; we may both be deceived. Dawkins says that his words and manner were violent and disrespectful.”

“Did Dawkins take the horse ?”

“Yes.”

“I wish old Ned had gone. Dawkins never forgave his taming Fury.”

“And so you think that I should not believe his report ?”

“Not without corroboration.”

“But there is the insult of sending back the horse.”

“Would you have retained it, sir, after what——”

“—After what I said yesterday, you would add, Mabel. To tell the truth, I do not think I should. But he might have written.”

“He might—I wish he had ; but——” she hesitated.

“But you would have me judge him kindly—and so I will. He declared his intention of leaving Wexton early this morning, or old Ned should take it again, for he more than earned it :—perhaps he feared this, for he took especial care to have his departure understood. Poor boy ! he has no horse at all ; — he should have guessed that I was vexed at my overwarmth by this time. Dawkins would have been back last night, but Fury cast a shoe, and he was obliged to wait till the morning. As it is, I suppose I must give the animal to your care, with old Ned as deputy, since I know not where the rash boy is to be found. I suspect Fury will have no cause to complain of neglect. But mind, if I yield thus much, giving up for the present the match with Bar-

rett, on which my heart was set—if I do not condemn the young man unheard, and promise to be no hard judge hereafter, you must remember that you are Philip Conyers's daughter — that his proofs must satisfy me; and should he be dishonourable enough to seek an interview, I expect——But I think I may trust you, Mabel.”

“ Indeed you may, were it only for this kindness,” replied his daughter with unwonted energy, kissing his cheek. “ He will not put me to the trial—he is far away ere this.”

“ I hope he is:—and now it is time that I should prepare for Merrick's, as I must go through Wexton on my way. If Staunton should not have the papers ready, I may stay with him to-night, instead of going on to Merrick's, for I should be glad of an excuse. It will be a riotous party, I am afraid, and I am in no mind for that, having had too many of them lately; but I could scarcely decline this without offence. I shall lead a quieter life now Durnsford is gone, and we will be

more together; I always feel a better man when you are near me. There may be some old customs not so praiseworthy as I believed—better if I had thought of these things in my younger days: better to learn to tread the right path in early youth—it is hard to walk in a strange road when old age is coming on but there is One who can make us strong, and keep us right.—If I go to Merrick's, I shall leave early, and be home before eleven:—if not returned then, do not expect me.”

Mr. Conyers went to make his toilet, by no means an elaborate one, and was soon again by his daughter's side, soothing and caressing her, and striving to shake off a sadness strange to him. Edward was not named; but when he spoke of the future, it was evident that his return was in his mind. Mabel noted this, and a light came into her soft eyes. Thus sat the father and his child planning schemes for the future, when the squire was informed that his horse was ready: even then he lingered, and rose reluctantly, loth to depart.

“This is playing the girl,” he said to him-

self, as he felt a presentiment of evil creeping over him, and shrank from saying "Good b'ye," though but for a few hours.

This was a strange thing to the honest squire, hitherto so little influenced by the poetry of love or the dreams of the imagination, and he was ashamed of the weakness. He conquered it in action ;—but in thought it lingered still.

"Good b'ye, Mabel," he said with a sudden effort, kissing her now glowing cheek. "Keep up a gay heart ; and let me see you to-morrow all yourself again : there are many bright days in store for us yet. Now the other cheek, lest this one should be jealous. There, child,—let me go ;" bursting from the arms that were clinging round him.

The squire stalked out of the room without looking back ; but he was glad to meet his child's smile as he rode beneath the window. His bow and the waving hand would not have disgraced a gallant knight of the olden times ; so truly does love lend a grace and beauty to the poorest act.

“I have not done the good I might and should, but much evil ;—and it is sad to have to think of this at my time of life, with so short a space before me to redeem the past. Would that I had walked more with my God in the days of my youth !—but, though late, with His help, I will look to my ways for the future. With my children round me,” and Edward Elton was included in the number, “my old age will be cheered, and I may find better joys than in the wine-cup. Would that Philip were come !—he delays. I must console myself by thinking that I shall the more rejoice in his presence,—and the poor shall have a feast.”

Such were the thoughts of Mr. Conyers as he rode through the village, where there was proof enough that, despite his popularity, he had not been an active and judicious steward of the gifts of Heaven. He had given, but not judiciously — on no fixed principle : he had been silent when he should have rebuked ; he had done what a natural kindness prompted, but he had not held himself accountable for the goods committed to his care. Health,

Creator. Born in a Christian
fessing the Christian faith, st
not been his rule of life ;—rich
of men, he had not felt himse
ing a Saviour. Holier hopes :
had come within the last few
sometimes clouded by the habi
of the past ;—a few weeks or
undo the work of years. He v
pairing—there was a new man
other works were not as yet p
to it.

Mr. Conyers regretted the
out the future ;—he planned v
years. How knew he that
granted to work in ? Let none
suit of good—let none delay in
negation : they who are in life

CHAPTER VII.

THE day passed—the evening came—and Mabel sat at the open window, looking out on the lengthening shadows and the changing lights, as the sun sank in the west behind his gorgeous canopy of cloud.

Her eye was on these things, but her heart was far away—with her father in his solitary ride—with her lover in his eager journey. There was sadness in her thoughts; but it was a beautiful and gentle sadness—a sobered joy rather than a remembered sorrow. Twilight faded into night; there was not a cloud in the clear grey vault, and the stars shone out with a gentle loveliness that would have soothed, not shocked, earth's greatest mourner. Still Mabel sat at the window, and still she marked but little of the outward scene.

There was a rustling among the shrubs

... advance, at first
ror, silent from fear—then with
it stood beneath the window,
round, and spoke.

“ Mabel ! my own love !
without your pardon — witho
I went at your bidding with
scorn and the words of insult in
I wait but to hear you say ‘ (
and then I go to redeem my p
have I watched for one momen
heard you were ill. I saw you
the bright sunshine and the t
but I could not approach, for th
near. Now in this friendly da
say farewell, and would hear yo
my errand in the gentle tones
are silent !—Do you too see ? ”

“ Say not so ! ” exclaimed Mabel, trembling with alarm at his quick tone. “ He is sorry—he would repair— ”

“ No more of that, Mabel ! ” interrupting her impetuously. “ I know what he says. I come not to speak of him ; I come to speak of our love—our hopes. I cannot cross your father’s threshold—I cannot stand in your father’s house, till I can claim the retraction of his words. The night is lovely—will you not come out beneath the light of the gentle stars ? ”

“ Alas ! do not ask it ! I dare not—my word is given to my father. Would that you had not come ! ”

“ I thank you for those words, and the wringing of your hands that prove their truth. What is a lover’s anguish to a father’s wish ? ”

He spoke with bitterness ; and even in the dim moonlight she could see his cheek, that had been white as marble, crimson as he spoke.

“ Nay, not so ! Oh, Edward, think not thus ! I would do aught I should to soothe you ; but my father is not harsh—he—— ”

“Speak not of him, if you would have me refrain from words which would shock your duty and your love.”

“Only hear me!” clasping her hands imploringly. “My dear father is—”

“Ay, your father is—” interrupting her with vehemence; then, stopping abruptly as he looked in her saddened features, he added in a gentler tone, “No matter what he is, dear Mabel; we will not speak of him. Since you grieve at my coming, you will rejoice at my departure.”

“Is this kind?”

“No; it is cruel—most cruel!” he replied as a tear fell on his upturned brow. “Forgive me! and say that you will mourn my absence.”

“But you will return?”

“And you wish it, Mabel?”

“Can you doubt it?”

“I will not doubt it. There shall be no tarrying in my steps. And you will think of me when far away?—you will let no threats induce you to recall that love you pledged to me?”

“ You do me wrong to doubt me thus.”

“ But if Mr. Conyers should refuse to redeem his pledge ?”

“ He will not refuse,” replied his child a little proudly. “ My father never broke his plighted word. Even now he—”

“ No more ! his very name burns in his insults with a deeper brand. His pledge was spoken but in scorn.—Do not rebuke me with that gentle look—turn not away, and I will strive to think upon him as your father,—but not now—his insults are too fresh upon my mind. I would not meet him—no, not for this world’s wealth ! I might forget he was your parent—I a Christian.”

“ Bring round the other dogs, Jem, whilst I let out the mastiff. I am sure the young fellow is skulking somewhere about the premises still ; and master ordered that he should be hunted away if he com’d here to look arter the girl. Make haste ! I hear a rustling by the sitting-room window.”

The harsh, angry tones of the speaker (Dawkins) came distinctly to the ears of the lovers ;

the one stunned by terror, the other nerved to exertion by the insult ; for that he was the young fellow meant, Edward doubted not. There was no time to lose, for the barking of the dogs sounded louder and nearer :—to remain, was to subject Mabel to remark and himself to needless shame.

“ Insult on insult ! cruelty on cruelty !—a sport to the base-born ! hunted, hounded, as a thieving miscreant ! And this — this from your father ! Mine is no common love, that I must love you still :—but I would not have him cross my path to-night. Farewell, love ! till I claim you as my own : till then, I pray you, have me in your heart. Farewell ! ”

Imprinting a kiss on the hand that rested on the sill as she leant from the window, he was gone before she could speak, hid from her sight by the shrubs, through which she could hear him forcing his way.

The barking under the window, and the harsh voices of Dawkins and his companion urging on the dogs, roused her from her stupor ; whilst the peril of him she loved supplied

that decision in which those who judged only from her gentleness believed her to be deficient.

“What is the matter?” she asked, leaning anxiously forward.

“Only some one among the bushes that should not be, Miss,” muttered Dawkins not very respectfully.

“Why do you think so?”

“The mastiff is on the track—he will soon have him,” shouted Dawkins, encouraging the animal, unheeding of Mabel’s question.

“Would you hunt a human being with dogs, merely for being in a shrubbery? and with one that you know would tear him to pieces? Come back, and call off the mastiff.”

The man stopped involuntarily at the authoritative tone of his young mistress—a tone so strange, so new: little did he guess that to her terror she owed the power of command.

“Master bade me drive un away,” muttered the man sulkily, unwilling to yield, and yet not quite daring to disobey.

“Not with fierce dogs, I am sure,” remarked

a deep un."

Mabel breathed more fi
and not Edward Elton, v
order and the search.

"Call back the dogs
Grange to-morrow," she s
ling obedience, though th
grumbled as he complied.

"I can't be answerable
to-night."

"I will be answerable
by Bat Wiggins. He sen
that he had left the villa
not, you should be the la
you know that your ma
against using the mastiff.
and take back the other dr

‘Do it—and that directly, or leave the Grange to-morrow.’

The man saw the necessity of recalling the dog, and accomplished it—but with muttered curses too low for Mabel’s ear, and the assertion that he had heard some one among the shrubs.

His companion, more humane, had shrunk away at Mabel’s reproof; and Dawkins followed his example, but with no friendly feeling for his young lady, being aware that his conduct towards Bat Wiggins would ill brook scrutiny.

No sooner was the man out of sight, than Mabel leant anxiously forward with straining eyes and eager ear, hoping to see the shadow of her lover on the moonlit grass—to hear the recoil of the boughs as they closed behind him. In vain she looked—in vain she listened! no form met her straining gaze—no step met her eager ear. How deeply did she mourn his coming, since he had departed confirmed, strengthened in his belief of her father’s unfriendly feeling towards him! How did she long for his return, though only for one short

five minutes, to convince him of his error ! How did she blame herself for not having insisted on his listening to her words !—but the interview had been so brief, so startling in its commencement and conclusion, that she had been unable to compel his attention. And now he was gone—gone with the feeling, as he had said, that insult on insult had been heaped upon him—cruelty on cruelty,—that he had been hunted by dogs and menials ! And by whose order ?—By her father's ! Her heart sickened at the thought.—She knew not his address ; so that even could she persuade her father to the act of writing, how could a letter reach him ? Her only hope was, that, hearing her order, he would return. Long and anxiously she watched ; but he came not. Then he was gone ! She could no longer doubt ;—the hope, the energy that had sustained her fainting spirits, failed at the conviction—her head sank on her arm, and the tears, hitherto restrained, burst forth in a passionate gush.

The clock struck ten ; she started at the sound—her father might be expected. She

strove to hush her sorrow and to wipe away its trace: she would not that he should see her thus;—she would not, if she could well avoid it, see him that night. He had bade her retire early, and she would do so:—deferring their meeting till the morrow would be a great relief. She must tell him of her lover's visit; and yet she shrank from the necessity. How could she bear to hear him blamed? Edward Elton had thought hardly of her father then; she feared he thought more hardly now, believing that he had been hunted by his order. Instead of wishing him back, perhaps she ought to rejoice that he was really gone—that he and her father would not meet till the hearts of both were softened. How did she know that they were not at that very moment standing in the presence of each other?"

As she put forth her hand to take a light, she started back. There was blood on the hand which her lover had clasped. Her first thought was that he had been wounded, and she sprang back to the window to see if there was blood on the green turf. There was none!

—the moon's pale light was full on the spot where he had stood, and there was no stain of blood on the silvered sword. He might have torn his hand forcing his way among the shrubs. Was it an omen of impending evil? She sank on a chair, covering her face with her hands; for her lover's look as he named her father, as he said, 'let him not cross my path!' came full upon her, with a fearful distinctness. But no! the fear was vain! As her father, he would respect—would do him no harm. She tried to hush her fears; but the fears of affection are not so easily hushed. She went to her room and dismissed her attendant almost immediately, with an unnatural calmness. The Mabel Conyers of that evening was a different being from the timid, shrinking Mabel Conyers of former days: she had thoughts which she dared not tell—terrors which she dared not show. She tried to wash the stain from her hand, but she thought it clung to her fingers with a wonderful tenacity; and she remembered the superstitions of the vulgar, that there is no cleansing the stain of murder. She put

her hand to her aching brow ; it burned beneath her touch :—she threw open the casement to admit the cool night air ; it only seemed to fan into a flame the liquid fire in her veins. Strange forms came flitting, gibbering round her ; unearthly voices whispered in her ear ; the figures of her father and her lover rose before her, sometimes apart, sometimes together—now in living wrath, now in the chill of death,—and then bleeding—suffering, with the glaring eye and the writhing form. She threw herself on the bed, burying her face in the clothes to shut out the fearful vision ; she prayed for strength to bear, or mercy to remove the weight that pressed upon her. Gradually the visions became less frightfully distinct ; and, worn out by the fears and the anxieties of the preceding days, and the last sleepless night, she sank into a feverish and restless slumber.

The light was still burning, though dimly, when she started up as if awakened by a sudden noise. It was some moments before she fully comprehended the events and the fears of the previous hours, and why she had flung

herself so hurriedly upon her bed without undressing. With this consciousness came also the conviction that some one was stirring in the house. Concluding it to be her father returned later than he had expected, and anxious to prove the fallacy of her late fears, she determined to proceed to his room, and by listening at his door, ascertain his presence.

Taking the flickering light in her hand, she trod the passage between the two apartments with a noiseless step, unwilling to have her anxiety known. As servants slept in a distant part of the house, she had no fear of encountering or disturbing any one. On reaching her father's door, to her surprise she found it partly open. She listened; there seemed neither light nor movement in that chamber, but she fancied that she could distinguish a slight rustling in an inner apartment, known by the name of Mr. Conyers's dressing-room, though his toilet was rarely arranged within it. She entered the outer room in silence, and then distinctly saw a faint light gleaming through the doorway, from whence likewise proceeded

a low murmur, and a rustling as of papers cautiously unfolded or crushed. A glance at the bed showed that her father was not there, and a survey of the room contradicted her belief of his return. Besides being the resting-place of the squire's favourite gun, some old trophies of the chase, and what Mr. Conyers called 'odds and ends,' in this miscalled dressing-room were also deposited the few simple medicines for men and women, horses and dogs, that were ever admitted within the Grange; no very valuable assortment, but still useful on sudden emergencies.

Knowing that one of the female servants had gone ill to bed, and concluding that the housekeeper, thinking her worse, had come to procure what might give her relief, Mabel advanced to offer advice or assistance, but stopped abruptly on the threshold, alarmed at what met her view. Directly opposite to her, against the wall on the further side of the inner room, was an old Indian cabinet, and before this, with their backs towards her, stood two men enveloped in foul-weather coats and large

slouched hats. Her noiseless tread had not disturbed them, and their occupation was continued without pause or interruption. The cabinet was open, and paper after paper was put hastily aside, till one compartment, the third from the right hand, was cleared. Into this one put his hand:—a loud snap and grating, as if from the opening of a secret drawer, was heard; and there was a movement as of triumph in the opener and his companion, but neither spoke. Some article was withdrawn from the recess, and the light, a dark lantern, trimmed to allow them to have a clearer view of the treasure. The taller of the two, taking it from the first discoverer, held it before the brightened light in exultation. The sleeve of his coat had been pushed back, probably to leave the hand with freer power to execute some noiseless manœuvre; and as that hand was held before the flame, (the fingers enclosing a glittering jewel,) its shape was strongly and clearly defined—a shape so singular, as, once seen in such a position, to leave no possibility of its ever being forgotten;

independent of a large scar of peculiar appearance on the under side of the wrist, in nearly as strong relief as the hand itself.

Mabel's eyes were fixed on these mysterious strangers through the fascination of fear:—she did not scream—she made no attempt to depart—she appeared deprived of all power, save to watch their movements,—a sort of mechanical watching, for she had no clear sense of what she looked on, or what she feared; but look she did,—and that hand with its scar haunted her dreams and waking thoughts for weeks—nay, months. Hitherto the strangers had stood so exactly opposite, that not even the outline of a face had met her view; but at this moment one turned towards her. His companion, roused by his start, did the same, and four glaring eyes were fixed upon her, gleaming the more fiercely from every other feature being completely hid by a masking of black crape.

She would have screamed—she would have fled; but, overcome by fear, the scream was but a low moan—the fleeing but an aimless

totter ; the candle in her hand flared up for a moment, showing her figure more distinctly, then died away in darkness. She saw those fearful beings come towards her ; but before they could reach her, she had sunk insensible upon the floor.

The birds were singing merrily, and the sun was shining brightly, when Mabel woke on the following morning from her heavy and unrefreshing sleep. She tried to raise her head from the pillow, but it sank back again on the instant, as a dull weight without the power of volition. The eyes refused to remain unclosed ; there was a subduing pain about the temples, and a weariness and weakness that forbade exertion. Giving up the attempt to rise, she endeavoured to recall and comprehend the past ; but there was a strange and painful confusion in her ideas and recollections. The circumstance the most distinct and vivid in her memory was that the least reconcilable with her present situation. She fancied that she had felt the glaring of fiery eyes upon her, gleaming out from blackened faces, as she

stood in the doorway of her father's dressing-room ; but here she was in her own apartment, lying on her own bed, without any knowledge of how she had returned thither, supposing that the frightful sight had been a reality, and not a dream. Again raising her head gently, and supporting it with her hand, she noted all things round to satisfy herself if those eyes had really glared upon her. Every thing in her apartment was just as usual, except that the candlestick, which she thought had fallen from her hands in the dressing-room, was not placed where she usually placed it : but that was a trifling change, which she might herself have made unheedingly. Another peculiar circumstance was, that she still retained her morning dress, whilst her auburn hair, unconfined by a cap, floated over her brow and throat in wild disorder. To account for this, she had some confused remembrance of having thrown herself on the bed, rather to shut out painful thoughts than to sleep ; and, overcome with fatigue and anxiety, she might unconsciously have fallen into a heavy slumber.

Her head became more painful from the exertion of thought—her eyes less willing to remain unclosed ; and yielding to the drowsiness which oppressed her, she again sank into a troubled sleep. Her dreams were a strange medley of all wild and horrible things. She started from her sleep in fear for which she could not account, and, springing from the bed, tried to reach the window. An indistinct murmur sounded in her ears ; but whether a reality or not, she could not tell, from the unusual confusion in her mind. A mysterious dread was on her ;—she turned from side to side at fancied sights and sounds, as one under the influence of opium. The dull pain in her temples became more acute, and one side could scarcely bear the slightest touching of her hand, whilst the indistinct murmur grew louder and louder ;—it seemed almost beneath her window. She sank on a chair, and closing her eyes, listened more intently. There was the trampling of many feet—the mingling of many voices—the harsh tones of manhood, and the gentler ones of woman, mixed with the shrill

notes of childhood—all, as it seemed to her bewildered mind, denoting some sad event, some cause for indignation or lament, though no one word came so distinctly on her ear as to enable her to guess at the source of this woful strain. She thought of the blood on her hand, and, in the desperate agony of fear, sprang to the window, and clinging for support to the iron stanchion, looked down upon the crowd below.

Her hearing had not deceived her—men, women, and children—the whole population of the village—were mingled in wild confusion; some uttering exclamations of sorrow—some of indignation,—all evidently moved and agitated by an unlooked-for horror.

In the centre of the advancing crowd, towards which all eyes were occasionally turned, was a rude litter, borne by four strong men, partly, and only partly, concealed by a cloak thrown carelessly over it. Close beside, uncovered, his hair disordered, his hands bound, and guarded by wrathful villagers, walked a young man of graceful figure and prepossessing countenance, though his cheek was deathly

pale from fear or remorse—from grief or shame. The taunts and insults of his guard were borne in silence—his eyes were bent on the ground; and how much he was moved was only shown by an occasional shudder.

Mabel looked down from her window on the young man—it was Edward Elton! An unsteady movement of the bearers, and a sudden gust, threw aside the cloak which concealed the dead man's face. She looked on him whom they bore—it was her father! Her maid rushed into the room at the moment, wringing her hands,

“ Oh, Ma'am, don't look out! I am come to beg you not to look out. Master was found in the road murdered, and they are bringing him home.”

The corpse and the prisoner had passed from her sight, and Mabel, turning from the window, stared on the speaker, as if asking the meaning of the vision.

The girl, though trembling at her wild look, repeated her words in accents of alarm.

“ Yes, ma'am; it is all true! Master was

found murdered ; and they have brought him home, and the wicked murderer too—Mr. Elton : and they say he will be hanged for certain :—that is some comfort !” added the girl with an hysterical sob.

Mabel’s eyes had gleamed fiercer and fiercer, and as the girl concluded, she gave a sudden spring towards her ; but the weakness of the body foiled the delirium of the mind. The girl screamed, cowering before her ; but instead of seizing her, as had appeared to be her first intention, Mabel burst into a wild unearthly laugh, and sank senseless on the floor.

CHAPTER VIII.

WEEKS passed before Mabel was strong enough to leave her room; the delirium of the first few days had long since been subdued, but it had left her weak and nervous, to a pitiable degree. She no longer yielded to violent bursts of agony that threatened instant dissolution; but there was a settled grief — a fearfulness — a feeling of horror — which time had not eradicated. Sometimes during her delirium she would address Edward Elton in accents of tenderness — sometimes, bid him depart, as if the thought of his presence was too great a grief and horror to be borne, though she appeared to entertain no settled conviction of his guilt.

The answers received to the inquiries which

she made of her attendants, were all calculated to prove that Edward Elton, and none but Edward Elton, was the murderer.

The squire's corpse was found early in the morning, by Dawkins and another man, on their way to market, who saw Edward Elton drag the body to the side of the road and search his pockets. On their approach he started up, looked round for a moment, and then darted off in the opposite direction, pursued by Dawkins and his companion, who had recognised the body at a glance, and were eager to secure the murderer. Dawkins called on him by name to stop, but the young man only increased his speed, and would have outstripped his pursuers, had he not fallen from treading on a rolling stone whilst descending a hill, which enabled Dawkins to come up and secure him. On being taxed with the murder, the young man admitted the fact, offering Dawkins a large sum to let him go: but the bribe being refused, he denied the crime with pretended indignation on the approach of his second pursuer, though they had clearly

verdict of a coroner's inquest. property of the deceased was found, but his own pocket-book was discovered by the body, supposed to be his, whilst he was stooping down to it. In that pocket-book was a violent letter, with strong expressions against the deceased;—so strong, that many thought it rendered the writer open to the charge of having been the instigator of the murder. The date, and the post-mark had been obliterated; but it was directed to "Mr. Elton," and signed — "Your friend, J. H. Elton."

The body was still warm when it was found, and could not have been long extinct. It had passed through the arm, lodged in the chest, and there were marks of violence on the body.

near which the murder had been committed ; why that intention had been abandoned the murderer could alone explain : and Edward Elton would say nothing on the subject, persisting in his innocence, though refusing to tell where he had spent the preceding day and night. The squire's horse was found grazing in an adjoining field. The young man was sent to the county gaol to take his trial for wilful murder at the next assizes, without one friend to cheer or countenance him ; loaded with abuse and insult—execrated by the whole county. His pretended sorrow for the death of Mr Conyers was but an aggravation of his guilt—his earnest inquiries, as to how Miss Conyers bore the shock, was an irreparable insult.

Edward Elton had departed to the gaol amidst the hooting and hate of the villagers—the kind-hearted squire was laid in the family-vault—yet Mabel knew not of either till days afterwards. He who had been speeding homeward, rich in the love of the young and true,

to obtain the proofs that should win him her hand, and redeem his honour, was in a dreary cell, hemmed in by strong stone walls.

He who had marked out plans for his future life—who had resolved on what to do, and what not to do—who had thought to rejoice in the love of his children—was a mouldering corpse in the dark and silent grave, with the worm for his fellow, and the cold earth for his bed.

Such was the substance of the intelligence received by Mabel in answer to her questions. She made no remark — her face was hid as she asked, and convulsive shudders alone spoke her agony. A relapse was the consequence, and Mr. Horton insisted on the subject not being discussed should she again enter on it.

She had very few acquaintances—the neighbourhood was so scattered, the roads so bad, she so shy ; and she had no friend. Lady Barrett sent to enquire—even asked her to her house, on the plea of her engagement to her son ; but this of course Mabel declined, stating that no engagement did, or could exist ; and

her haughty ladyship made no renewal of her offer. It would be more correct to say that Mr. Durnsford declined it for her, at her desire; and but for him she would have stood alone in the world, without one friend to whom she could apply for aid or counsel. On account of his long friendship for Mr. Conyers, he had been sent for immediately after the murder, and made no delay in coming to the Grange, where he had remained ever since, or with such brief absence only as his own affairs or those of the deceased required. By the squire's will, dated soon after his sister's death, Durnsford was left his executor and Mabel's guardian; and no executor or guardian could be more zealous and judicious in the fulfilment of his duties. Young Philip Conyers was joined with him in these offices—but he came not.

The farm, the household, Mabel's comfort, were all looked into and arranged with a judgment, kindness, and good feeling, not to be surpassed. Many of the idle retainers were dismissed, but dismissed without awakening those feelings of anger that a rash innovator

would have occasioned. Mabel's personal attendant (a simple ignorant girl from the village, whose abrupt announcement had done such evil,) was replaced by one selected by himself, who proved the wisdom of his choice by her judicious nursing. Nor did he show his fitness for the offices assigned him in matters of business only, he was equally judicious in matters of feeling. He removed from Mabel's view, and avoided the mention of, all that might renew her anguish ; and without checking her burst of passionate sorrow on their first meeting, or shocking the grief of the bereaved by chilling arguments, he succeeded, by sympathizing with her, in calming her emotion, and leading her mind to other subjects.

Mr. Conyers had no near relatives ; with distant ones, or those of his wife, since the death of her two brothers, he had for years held little intercourse. The clergyman of the parish, to whom Mabel would have turned for support and consolation, was one of that class, now happily nearly extinct, who, entering the church solely for its emolument and fancied

leisure, with a strong distaste for its holy duties, satisfied his conscience by performing the service once on a Sunday, and hurrying through the necessary christenings, marriages, and burials; spending the rest of his time in hunting, shooting, eating, drinking, and sleeping. To whom therefore could Mabel look but to Mr. Durnsford—ever kind, ever considerate; sharing her sorrow, trying to promote her good and pleasure? To him, then, she turned with something of the feelings of a child towards a parent, mingling duty with her esteem, considering him as the guardian appointed by her father. She loved him for his pale cheek, and the tears he shed at their first meeting after her sad loss. No one could doubt the shock which the death of his old friend had occasioned—he had never completely recovered it; he still shrank from touching on the subject, unless absolutely compelled to do so.

By her father's will Mabel was to receive two thousand pounds, independent of her aunt's legacy to double that amount, should her bro-

ther return ; if not, the entail having run out, she was to inherit the whole property ; taking possession on coming of age, or marrying with Durnsford's consent. The estate was liable to some heavy charges, besides the four thousand pounds due to the late Miss Conyers, and bequeathed to Mabel, and of which the interest had alone been paid ; but by judicious management, Mr. Durnsford was convinced that his ward would be no mean heiress, should her brother's return, so long delayed, never occur. However unlimited in his power as guardian, he had hitherto made a point of consulting Mabel on every point on which she could have a wish or a feeling — partly to withdraw her from those gloomy thoughts that were preying on her mind, wearing hope and life away ; partly from the pleasure he had ever found in complying with her desires, listening to her low sweet voice, and meeting her grateful smile. Hitherto the interest he had excited by a detail of his arrangements had been so slight as scarcely to deserve the name ; for he had cautiously avoided all mention of what

would too strongly move her by its connexion with the past — it had been a passive rather than active interest ; if she had assented, and smiled her thanks, it had been only not to appear ungracious. In spite of her efforts, her manner was listless, her smile faint and forced, her voice, though sweet, monotonous ; there was generally no energy in look or tone, but occasionally a wild light would come into her dull eye, and she would start, and gaze anxiously round or up into his face, as if with some desire never revealed and never realized.

She was lying on the sofa in the drawing-room, pale and silent, Mr. Durnsford sitting beside her, as he so often did, his face partly hid from her observation, whilst hers was fully exposed to his. She was better than she had been since her father's death, and after a few desultory remarks, her guardian ventured to touch on topics of deeper interest.

“ You are the most obedient and confiding of wards, dear Mabel, if you will allow me to call you so ; always ending our consultations with the flattering words—‘ I leave all to you ;

in whom I so fully confide ;' but still I feel a delicacy in acting on some occasions without your express concurrence, lest I should unwittingly cross your wishes. I fear to pain you by thus referring to your opinion ; but you will bear with me should I weary or agitate you, knowing that I would not willingly do either. I have received this morning a handsome offer for the hunters, which will of course be useless to you. Have I your sanction to——?"

" Sell nothing of his ! Make no traffic of aught he loved or prized !" interrupted Mabel with a quivering lip.

" I understand—I admire the feeling," replied her guardian, his own voice echoing the unsteadiness of hers ; " but they are useless to you—expensive to keep ; it is a pity they should remain idle, fine animals as they are. What would you that I should do with them ?"

" Keep them on as though——as at present. Should my brother return, they will be his ; if not, I shall give them away. They are useless to me, but he took pleasure in them ; and I repeat, there must be no traffic in what he

loved. The same with the dogs. Keep those he prized—let the rest go if you will ; but get them kind masters. If you talk of expense, take the money left by my dear aunt.”

“ I will not argue, but comply,” replied Mr. Durnsford, after a moment’s pause of surprise at her unwonted decision of tone and purpose.

Her words had been scarcely audible from her faltering voice, and she spoke quickly lest she should become unable to speak at all ; still, this unusual promptness and energy—this resolving without consulting him, showed either some new and unexpected developement of character, or that affection could overrule her dependance and timidity.

“ Fury was not included in this arrangement — of course, you have no objection to part with him ?” His tone and manner were indifferent, but his keen eye was on her, though she saw it not.

Mabel started at the name ; and answered more abruptly and hurriedly than before. “ Fury is mine, Mr. Durnsford, and cannot be parted with. Old Ned heard him given to

ceased speaking, but
through her slender
turned aside, answered
"All shall be as you

A long silence arose,
rose, walked to the
his seat. Mabel was

"Will you, Mr. I
pose of the dogs, set
mark — a very slight
You will prize them
and it will please me
will replace them should
Do not refuse me, or
offended you."

"Offended me, sweet
be! I am only mortally

and gentle, who, not compelled to exertion, and as yet untaught by experience of the power of time to soothe, believe in the eternity of sorrow.

“Not so! you have wealth and youth; and I hope health may be shortly added to your blessings. You are not alone in the world—not useless—helpless: others will look to you for succour, and for soothing. Shall they look in vain?”

She was silent, but not unmoved. Mr. Durnsford was skilled in reading hearts—he knew how to strike the note to which her gentle nature would respond, and continued—
“Yours will be no narrow circle, no bounded sphere of good: sorrow teaches the heart it touches how to soothe; and in consoling others, the kind and the gentle forget that they too have wounds which require healing. It is not in your nature to grieve those who love you, by yielding to a gloom that is eating life away, as the worm eats away the rose;—a gloom that must incapacitate you from fulfilling those offices of kindness to the many who will most

probably look up to you for aid or protection, and which I know you will consider it your duty to afford. You are yet new to suffering, and cannot understand that time and occupation bring relief:—I have seen more years, and have noted sorrow pass away as a cloud, leaving no trace behind. It will not be so with you—I would not that it should; but is it right to reject all consolation, and cling tenaciously to suffering? You should exert yourself, were it only for the sake of those who love you.”

“I may not dispute with you! I cannot argue—I only feel! Do not chide me; there is a terror over me I cannot drive away. I would thank you, but I have not words. But for you, I should be desolate indeed!”

The hand held out trembled not more than that which pressed it. This sympathy was a fresh link between them; but though touched by her manner he did not change his purpose.

“I ask no thanks—but shall my friendship and service, which you so much overrate, plead in vain?”

“What do you wish?” asked Mabel, relapsing into her usual listlessness.

“I wish you to seek health and peace in change of air and scene; you can scarcely gain them here.”

“I cannot! I will not!” she exclaimed with an energy and wildness that startled and displeased him.

There was a touch of reproof in his reply.

“I am no rigid guardian, Miss Conyers, that you need speak so strongly; and, urging nothing save for your good, I still hope to win your consent. Why linger here, feeding with sights and sounds the grief that is wasting mind and body? It is selfish!—it is sinful!—Seek health and peace in a new scene,”

“There is no health or peace for me, here or elsewhere! New scenes would but increase my gloom.”

“At least try.”

“No, no, let me remain!”

“As a friend, as a guardian, as one deeply interested in your good, I must still urge compliance. In all else I have yielded: but now,

when even life may be at stake, I must be firm."

"And what is life to me?" exclaimed Mabel with her former startling energy; "I cannot go till——"

"Till when?" he inquired, for she paused abruptly; — but she changed the wording of her answer.

"I have not yet been where he lies — till then I could not go in peace."

"This is but nourishing your sorrow till it grows a sin."

She shook her head.

"I will not chide — I will not forbid; you shall have your way in this, and then you will consent to mine. I did not mean that you should go to-day, or to-morrow; but in a week I trust you will be able to endure the trial, — since you will have it so, and then we will try different air," he added soothingly, alarmed at her increasing agitation.

"I will not deceive you: I cannot go even then."

“ And why not ?” he asked with a vexation which he was at no pains to conceal. “ Why not ?” he repeated a little impatiently, as she hid her face in her hands, but no reply.

“ I will abide here, at least till—”

“ Till when, Miss Conyers ?” bending towards her to catch the meaning of her low unsteady tones, broken by sobs.

“ Till the time appointed—till after it shall be proved who made me an orphan.”

Mr. Durnsford started from his seat at this unlooked for announcement, and paced the room in strong emotion. Mabel hid her face more closely, and her sobs came quicker—louder. When her guardian again took his seat beside her, his cheek was as the cheek of the dead ; but there was a contraction of the brow, and a sternness of resolve in look and tone, belonging only to the living.

“ I did not expect this, Mabel, though it may be natural. No wonder you should wish that one so kind, so noble, should be avenged ; that heartlessness and cruelty so barbarous

“ I would know the contents of that letter.”

“ Why dwell on what can only agitate you? Let us drop the painful subject.”

“ Bear with me! I must hear them.”

“ You rule me, Mabel, as though I were a child; and not for your good I fear. These are the words—I noted them in my pocket-book :

“—‘ Can the child of my hopes and cares dwell in friendship with one of my deadly foes? Will he sit at his side? Will he smile on his child? Can he for whom alone I lived—bearing my weight of woe for weary years—can he grasp that hand in kindness which poured insult upon me? Let him fly from the deceiver! let him not remain one moment longer beneath his roof! Rather let him upbraid him with my wrongs—and avenge them. Hold no friendship with Philip Conyers. Look on him as on an enemy. Shun him and his as you would a pestilence—if you would not incur the curse of

“ ‘ YOUR FATHER.’ ”

“Such were the words, without date or signature.—I would have spared you this; but you would not be spared. Believe me, absence for a time will bring relief.”

“But he asserted his innocence,” said Mabel, answering more to her own thoughts than her companion’s words.

“It would be worse than madness to admit his guilt at present; but in his first alarm at his detection he admitted it to Dawkins.”

“I have no good opinion of Dawkins,” said Mabel quickly.

“Of course you have sufficient reasons for this distrust, or you would not feel it; but he has ever been counted honest, and was much attached to his noble master.”

“Who were those men in the dressing-room on that very night?” asked Mabel abruptly, pursuing her own train of thought without heeding her companion’s remark, or the simplicity of expecting that he could give an answer.

Again was Mr. Durnsford startled. There were so many points in her present conduct at

total variance with her late listlessness and silence and former timidity, that he knew not how to frame his answers : for this last question particularly he was unprepared—it was most distressing, yet an answer must be given, for she spoke again.

“ Can you surmise ? ” she demanded, turning hastily towards him.

“ I know nothing of any men, sweet Mabel ; we will talk of other things ; ” he replied, looking away from her wild gaze.

“ No ! we will not talk of other things,” she said with a resolution not to be withstood : “ I ask you, who they could be ?—why they were there ? ”

“ You ask what it is neither needful nor possible to answer. You heard and saw many things after that shock which none saw or heard beside ; and the delusions of delirium linger long when the body has not regained its strength.”

“ It was before the shock—it was no delusion of delirium,” she replied more resolutely, impatient at his incredulous smile.

“Be it as you will, Mabel:—but, why speak more of them? They did you no harm—forget them.”

He spoke with the soothing gentleness and incredulous submission so provoking to one who feels that the point yielded in compassion is fact, not fancy.

“When I name this subject, all look, and speak, and shake their heads, as though my senses wandered. I am under no delusion, as you think: it was no mere fancy. I saw—I felt them clearly. I saw two men with blackened faces standing before the cabinet—I felt their eyes like burning coals upon me—they advanced—the scream died on my lips—I know no more distinctly. I woke in my apartment the next morning; how I came there—why they spared me, I cannot tell: but when I woke, my senses were confused, some heavy evil seemed upon me. I tried to think; but my thoughts were as a wild maze, without path or order. I have felt something like it since, when they sought to gain me rest by opiates, but not in the same wild degree. The horror of

that night, and of that morning !” covering her face with her hands, as though hoping to exclude their memory.

“ Be calm, I entreat ! I begged you not to speak on this subject.”

“ But I must speak. You doubt me still ! Why should I say other than the truth ?”

“ You would not deceive : — I know that you believe you saw all this.”

“ I know I saw it !”

“ So be it, then ! we will let it pass,” he replied, yielding to her importunity, though evidently not from conviction, but only to calm her agitation. “ Suppose it were so, it would matter little ; they might have been two of the servants, whom, in your alarm, you failed to recognise.”

“ They were not two of the servants ; they came from afar, and had horsemen’s coats ;” said Mabel, in a hollow voice, laying her hand on his arm, that trembled beneath her touch as she looked anxiously on him.

“ Ha ! what then ? what would you infer ?” he demanded hastily.

“ It was that night !—might not they have done it ?”

She spoke with a voice so strange and deep, and a cheek so pale, yet with such an unearthly fire in her eye, no wonder that her guardian stared upon her, shrinking from her touch. It was as if one had risen from the dead to accuse—her tone was not the tone of a timid girl.

“ Might it not be so ?”

“ It might,” he answered, rousing himself to speak ; and his voice too was strange and hollow.

Had he not truly loved his friend, when he was thus moved at the memory of his death ?

“ It might be so, though I see not the probability. Have you the slightest suspicion of their identity ?”

“ They were too well disguised.”

“ You would not know them again, then ?”

“ Certainly not,—unless seen under something of the same circumstances. Yet I think I should feel their presence, and shudder with instinctive horror.”

He smiled incredulously.

“ You did not hear them speak ? ”

“ No: but surely you doubt no longer ? Could you not make inquiries ? Some one must have seen and heard them besides me.”

“ Did the dogs bark ? ” he demanded abruptly, after musing for some moments.

“ No ! ”

“ Ha ! Then it could not have been a stranger, but one who could control them by love or fear. If none of the servants, I know but one who could hush them all.”

“ Who ? ” demanded Mabel with breathless eagerness.

“ Edward Elton.”

For a moment she appeared subdued by the answer, but rallied on the instant.

“ For what should he have been there ? ”

“ You can answer that as well as I :—your father kept his money in that cabinet. Who so likely to know this ? who so much in need of gold as Edward Elton ? ”

“ Now shame upon you, Mr. Durnsford, for the thought ! ” exclaimed Mabel Conyers starting from the couch, her pale cheek glowing as

she spoke. "He is not one who would do evil for gain. If he hath sinned—and I believe it not—it was done in the heat of passion, at the call of a false honour."

Mr. Durnsford absolutely cowered beneath the indignant glance of his ward; but the glow and the glance passed away, and, exhausted with the violence of her emotion, she fell back pale and fainting. He would have called assistance, but she prevented him; and the water brought from a side table enabled her to continue the conversation, agitating as it was.

"Forgive me, Mabel, if I pained you; but Conyers and myself were friends from youth—our regard was the growth of years, and I cannot think of his loss with calmness—I cannot judge as charitably as perhaps I ought of one against whom appearances are so very strong. I may wrong the young man; but, surely, I should be pardoned, if more anxious than others to have justice done on my friend's murderer. I, at least, can feel no love for him who is charged with such a crime."

The daughter's cheek flushed at the imputation.

"Can you think the child feels less than the friend? Did I not love him too?" she asked reproachfully.

"I do not—I cannot doubt it: and yet our feelings are widely different. I think only on having justice done upon his murderer; you can feel—pity must I call it?—for a stranger."

"Mr. Elton is no stranger; you forget his services."

"I will not say that those services were overrated; but were they not rewarded? I know that you feel only pity; but the world may not judge so kindly of your noble nature: it was for this that I spoke of change—even now there are whispers."

"What whispers, Mr. Durnsford?" she demanded, looking on him steadily, though her voice faltered.

"Since you desire it, I answer even at the risk of paining you: better a transient pang than the shadow of reproach on your fair name. There are those who, having heard of the

young man's presumption, and his false assertion that you at least would not believe him guilty, hint that the daughter feels too deep an interest in him by whom her father fell; and that if the law should acquit him, though the public voice condemn, she will not refuse him her hand. In a word, they say plainly, that Mabel Conyers loves Edward Elton.—Forget the words of the slanderers!—think not of what you forced me to repeat!” he continued soothingly, her emotion becoming so great that he trembled for the consequences.

“The words may be only the words of slanderers; but the same belief is held by others. You should have known me better—done more justice to a daughter's love,” she exclaimed, flinging off, as she spoke, the hand laid on her arm to calm her excitement. “I would but secure the safety of the innocent—leave justice to her free course, unwarped by prejudice. If the law acquit, it is for none else to condemn. But think you that the daughter could plight her hand to one on whom the shadow of suspicion lingered? Edward Elton would not ask it—

Mabel Conyers would not hear of it : she weds not till her father's murderers shall be revealed—it may be—never.”

Mr. Durnsford shrank from her indignation, and stammered forth an apology ; but she heard him not. The body of her father, as she had seen it on the bier, rose up before her, and a burst of anguish shook her frame. It was long before she was sufficiently calm to listen to his soothing assurances.

“ I did indeed wrong you, but only for a moment, and through my anxiety lest a stain should rest on your fair fame. I know that woman's heart is too gentle, too confiding, to credit willingly the guilt of the guilty—the possibly innocent, if that will please you better. Fearing that your gentle nature would lean too much to pity, I spoke more strongly than I should, — perhaps, judged the young man harshly. Speak your wishes, and they shall be fulfilled. I now know, you will do nothing unfitting the daughter of Philip Conyers ; but you must first pronounce my pardon—first promise to confide in me as heretofore.”

“Think me not so ungrateful as to refuse either—but I would have you believe him innocent,” she said, after some hesitation, looking on the ground.

“I will try so to believe.”

“I would wish you further to make all inquiries that may bring the truth to light: not cold, formal inquiries—they clear nothing. But you will be zealous for the sake of him we have lost.”

“Doubt not my zeal! No one can be more interested in the discovery of the real criminal than myself.”

“And those men;—you will question of them?”

“Since you desire it.—It is a strange tale! Mr. Horton and another gentleman accompanied me when I set my seal on the cabinet, and nothing was out of order.”

Mabel saw that he still believed her labouring under a delusion; but saw, also, the hopelessness of any further endeavour to convince him of the truth of her statement.

“One thing more: you will not conceal

from me what you learn, on the plea of my health ; if I believe anything withheld, it will but increase my anxiety."

"I will not withhold what I learn ; but, in return, you must pay some heed to my advice. If my inquiries bring knowledge, it must be from their secrecy and seeming carelessness, and I must therefore beg you not to touch on the subject to others : indeed, for your—for both our sakes, better not needlessly enter on it again ; it is too harassing for you in your present state. What I learn, I will tell unasked ; if silent, you will understand that I have acquired no information."

In the wisdom of this Mabel readily acquiesced ; the guardian and his ward resumed their usual habits of regard and confidence ; and when she retired for the night at an early hour, to seek that rest which she could not find, their parting was as friendly as it had been for many preceding days. If he had not found her as yielding as he had expected, he showed neither disappointment nor displeasure.

The next day Mr. Horton declared her to be

worse, the effect of her emotion : but the conversation, though transiently injurious, was permanently beneficial, and she gained strength daily, but very slowly. She would sometimes look anxiously up in the face of her guardian ; but though, ever desirous to please her, he made no reply to her look, and understanding from this that no knowledge had been gained, she would turn away with a sigh. Thus days passed on.

CHAPTE

“THEY told me you were
about your nephew,” said
dressing old Ned, who was
holding it in one hand
his hair with the other.

“So I do, Miss Mabel
altering his position, and
embarrassed by her kind-

“Shut the door, come
Ned. If I can help you
done. I hope no accident

“No, miss, thank you
groom, so far obeying her
to close the door and

“ Oh, he is quite well !—thank you kindly, miss, for the axing. I hopes you won’t be offended, but indeed, and indeed, Miss Mabel, I could not help it, but cried like a child only to look on him ;—so thin and so pale, and everybody abusing un ; and he speaking so kindly, and so sorrowful like of my poor master. It would have done your heart good to have seen un ; and the large tears running down his cheeks, thof he tried to hide them. Then, if you had but heard un ask a’ter you, so gentle, and so loving like ; and a’ter Fury too, and some of the dogs. And he was so glad, poor fellow, to hear as how you would not let any one mind Fury but me ; and that you was better, and did not speak hard like of un.”

“ I am obliged to your nephew for his inquiries, and know no reason why I should speak hardly of him,” she replied, at a loss to guess the old groom’s meaning, and rather overcome by his allusion to Fury and her father.

The man looked perplexed.

“ Where is your nephew ?” she inquired encouragingly, surprised at his embarrassment,

but concluding that he felt awkward concerning some coming request.

“ Thank you kindly, miss ; he is just going to be under-groom at Mr. Perry’s — Squire Perry, as they calls un ;—but I am mortal glad you bean’t offended, for I had not the heart to refuse un, he looked so sad like, saying that he knowed everybody was against un, though he had not had no hand in it.”

“ I suppose your nephew wants a little outfit,” said Mabel, judging such to be the meaning of his strange discourse, (more strange and rambling than usual,) giving him a guinea for the purpose.

The old man’s eyes glistened.

“ I thanks you most humbly, miss : you be always kind to everybody. I remember your mother—a sweet lady she was, and you be just like her now you looks so mollingcolly like. I wish I could hear you laugh again and be merry ; but these be sad times—sad times indeed, miss : there be no getting places nohow — the gentlefolks does not keep so many servants as they did ; and they do say as how the wages

is to be lowered : but I can't think the gentlefolks will do that ; do you think they will, Miss Mabel ? It is little we gets to put by some'at for old age. And Tim Smith says as how, there is a great distemper among the dogs,—they dies off by dozens. Bad times indeed ! better keep ours up, Miss Mabel, I think,—don't you ?”

“ Certainly, sad times indeed !” replied his young lady, a sigh and a smile contending for the mastery.

“ Yes—sad times indeed, miss ; all the grass drying up, cause of no rain—the poor horses can't get nothing to eat, and the baily says as how, the smut is in the wheat, and the yoats won't be worth nothing. And my kind master ! I never thought to see him put into the grave afore me, and I five years older :—and Miss Elizabeth gone too, and Master Elton shut up now in the bright summer time, when Fury is just fit to ride. Better now, though, than when the hunting is about. As I says to my nevy, ‘ There's no knowing what may come next ; so be a good lad, and don't keep bad company, or you may come to the gallows.

7 - 100 114001

" I am rather
more for your ney
he would take the

" Thank you ki
be a different crea
good times may c
miss ; my nevy do
he have got a good
Perhaps, you woul
of him looking so
out of my head.—
folded paper from
fumbling. " Mr.
sober and honest ;
miss, not to be offe
fused un for a thou
pitiful with the tea

paper placed in her hand, she unfolded and began to read it, purely to please old Ned ; but never before did the character of an undergroom produce such a wondrous effect on a high-born maiden :—the spell of some mighty enchanter was upon it. The hands grasped the paper with convulsive strength, as though life and death were in its keeping ; the brightened eye glanced eagerly over the contents, and the lightened heart drank in the meaning of the words with trembling delight.

“ Where did you get this ?” she questioned hastily.

“ From Mr. Tyrrel, where young Ned, as they calls un, lived afore. Don’t he say that the lad is sober and honest ? It is a shame if he don’t,” replied the groom, amazed at her emotion.

“ This is not your nephew’s character : where did you get it ?”

“ Not Ned’s character ? Lauk, miss, then I suppose it is the other paper that Master Elton gived me. Poor young gentleman ! I hope, miss, you bean’t affronted ; but you said

thin, poor fellow !
friend. I hopes you

“ No, no ! only to
and what he said,”
ing to subdue the e
Ned.

“ Lauk, miss ! wh
the gaol ?—in a little
one to speak to un,
You must know, mi
ers is a cousin of mi
lad he is, and very f
sent word he had so
a-going to Stanfield
carriage horse,—you
the bay un with th
to myself I'd just ca

“

last I could not help axing after Master Elton ; — it came quite nataral like, you know, miss. I always took to un from the first ; the same as you and my poor master did. So I up and axed ; and Jem shook his head, and said ‘ it was a bad job, folks said so much agin un, cause everybody liked the squire as was gone : — for his part, he did not know what to say ; — the young gentleman seemed very quiet, and spoke civil and kind to any that served un, but he did not seem to trouble about his defence, and only sat still, looking without seeing like, — or else, reading his bible. Somehow or other, he did not think as how he did it, for he seemed as sorry for the squire as thof he had been his son. If he did, it must have been when he was in a passion, and did not know what he was about.’

“ So then, miss, I thought as how I would see him, hoping you would not be ’fronted if you heard of it. I am sure, I loved my kind master as well, or better than them as says more about it ; and great cause I had too, — he was always a good friend to me and

mine," drawing his hand across his eyes: "but my mind misgived me, that Master Elton could not have been so wicked; he was so fond of the squire and you, Miss Mabel, and rode so well, and was so gentle to all dumb animals—and they so fond of him too. I thinks a great deal of the likings of dumb animals—they sees and knows more nor some believes. God has not gived them tongues to speak,—at least, not as we always understands; nor they haven't reason as we have: but then they knows what will do them harm, and who is their real friends; and they shows who they likes by jumping up and barking—speaking as plainly as they can, poor dumb creatures! I can't abide to see them ill used. A dog don't go away and leave you, and abuse you, because trouble comes upon you, as some as calls themselves Christians do. To my mind, Miss Mabel, a faithful dog as loves his master, and does what he tells un, keeping his house by night and day, ain't so much below an honest servant as some thinks.—I said I would go and see the young gentleman; for I was sure, if I

only seed un, I should know if he had killed my master or not. So I goes along a narrow cold passage, and Jem opens a door—and I looks over his shoulder, and there was Master Elton, sitting with a bible on his knees, but so changed, miss! Lauk! he looked ten years older, to be sure, than when I seed un last. He looked up quiet and sad like at Jem; but when he seed me, he jumped up of a sudden, and his white cheek came as red as a rose; and he looked almost as happy as he used to do when walking with you or master. I saw in a minute that it was all right, or he would not have been so glad to have seen me: but I thought I'd try un more;—so I said, 'If you did not kill the squire, sir, as they says you did, shake hands; but if you did—may your hand fall off before I touches it!' If you had but seen how he sprang upon me and seized my hand! and we gripped each other hard. If it had been the king's own hand, he could not have taken it sooner, or looked more glad: so then I was sartain it was all a lie. 'I was sure you had no hand in my poor

...that he would

that we might not
neither—only we

“But, lauks,
then they will see.
Now don't you tell
my poor master what

Here the simple
the woman again
longer to be con-
despair, making
minable and unin-
ing her emotion, but
all. Talking being
pation, he continued
tially as before, and
him prosy, as she
more times—

well as any judge, that you bean't guilty ; and I will stand up for you agin them all. But you must keep a good heart—God won't let the innocent suffer ; and afore I dies, I shall see his real murderer hanged.' The young gentleman looked pleased, and thanked me kindly ; not a bit proud, but as if I was a gentleman like himself. Then, to be sure, I thought he would have axed ater Fury, or the hunters ; but for a long time he did not speak, and sometimes his cheek was as white as Sarah's apron, and sometimes as red as the cook's face when a cooking, his forehead and all : and one minute he looked down, as thof ashamed of some'at ; and then he looked up in my face, pitiful and eager, like old Ranger, when he wants to coax me to let un out. I could not think what he wished ; but at last, of a sudden, he bursts out all in a stammer. ' How is Miss Conyers ? — Does she speak hardly of me ? — Does she think me guilty ? ' To be sure, the grip he gived my arm, 'cause I did not answer directly for staring at him, he looked so strange and so wild. And now, miss, I hopes you won't be

and some said he
—but, somehow,
and I could not let
the king's horses
would have killed
if I had; for he was
every minute till
as how you was but
thing bad of him
was too bold; but
I could not. If
guineas down, he
pier — no, nor so
like himself again.
I had said that he
ride after the hound
gan asking question
you looked? I -

to expect it. But, then I told him of what you had done about F'ury; and how you axed after him very often, and gave orders that he should be well taken care off. So at that he brightened up. Then we talked about you and my poor master; and should have talked longer, only Jem came to say as how I must go. Then he axed me to take a note, and give it into your own hands, when nobody was by. 'It is her father's last words,' says he, 'but no one else will believe me; and I would not give them to you only I know I may trust you.' 'That you may,' says I, 'and I will promise to take it safe.' It would have killed him outright if I had not. He tore a leaf out of a book, and wrote this with his pencil. I would go to see him again, only he won't let me, and made me promise not to say I had been, or tell anybody what he told me.

"When I comed home last night, I sent word I wanted to say something to you about my nevy:—and so I did, no lie neither, cause I wanted to speak about some un else besides. I hopes, miss, you don't think I was too bold,

that which has cost
a great relief to
pretend to know

“ Well, miss,
nobody ; and yet
keeping the secret
letter between you
gone, and her lover
uncle died, and I

“ This is not
rather proudly.

“ No, miss,
with perfect sim-
ple master, as he
about such things
as he will be, and
I warrant his

Mabel with many injunctions of secrecy, since Mr. Elton wished it, with which he promised implicit compliance ; and she was left to read again and again her literary treasure.

A power—ay, a spell, as we said before, was in that paper with its uncertain characters :—it soothed her sorrow for the dead—dispersed her doubts of the living. She might love without sin,—she had her father’s sanction ; for to disbelieve the writer of those lines—to discredit his statement—never entered her imagination. And what were those lines ? By what simple words was that mighty magic wrought ? They were these :

“ TO MISS CONYERS.

“ All else believe me guilty—but do not you think so ! Judge me not by my rash words when we parted ! I would have laid down my life even then for him, as your father, to have saved you but one tear. Judge me not by my father’s letter—judge not him ! believe me, its violence must have been founded on delusion—was but a momentary burst. They swear falsely ! I was not searching the dead

for gold:—I was seeking eagerly for life, — life which had passed away whilst blessing you and blessing me. Yes! with his hand clasped in mine, his head resting on my bosom, he bequeathed you to my love—my care; he spoke to me as to a son. His taunts were forgotten; we thought only of our first meeting—of our mutual regard. ‘Tell Mabel that I love her, that I bless her with my dying breath, and leave her to your care!’ were the last words which met my ear. The name of his murderer was on his lips, but the voice was so low and broken, that I could not catch the sound distinctly:—to venture on a guess were useless. He thought of those he loved, more than of those who had done him wrong. To speak of these things to the many would but increase their clamour—others would not believe; but you—surely you cannot doubt me, Mabel? Yet they said at first that you shuddered at my name. It was that which crushed me!—What was the scorn of others to your hatred? By my love—you know how I loved—I am guiltless! I ask not if you love me still;

I would not link you with a wretch like me. I would not furnish slander with a weapon that could wound you, but I do demand that you believe me innocent ! Should I be cleared, and not the shadow of suspicion rest upon me, then will I claim the trust the dying left me :— till then, I do but ask that you think of me kindly. Should the guilty triumph, (and I see my peril,) God's will be done ! May He teach me to submit ! and raise you up a mightier guardian !—a more zealous one you could not have. I would I might have soothed your sorrow — but this could not be. I believe the bearer may be trusted, yet, for both our sakes, I dare not write more openly. Speak not of this even to those in whom you most confide :— let the guilty be lulled into security ! That Heaven may have you in its holy keeping, prays the wretched, yet not quite hopeless,

“ EDWARD ELTON.”

Mabel longed to show this letter to Mr. Durnsford, and engage his sympathy for the unhappy prisoner ; but this the prisoner's warn-

the innocent;" and
wavered and grew
is the human he
yielded to despa
faith?

This was not
Mabel was to rec
of her weeping ha
of hope still linger
in the evening, on
usual seat beside h

"What a chan
Mr. Horton may
There is a life ab
long wished in vain
of hope had falle
blighted heart w

"I know how kind you are," said Mabel sweetly.

"Ah, Mabel, your gentle flattery is so delicious!—it sounds so like sincerity."

"It is not flattery, Mr. Durnsford."

"Say not so if you would have me retain sobriety. Those gentle tones are too inebriating; whilst listening to them, I forget all beside."

Mabel looked up with a smile at his extravagance, assumed to amuse her; and Mr. Durnsford again became the sober guardian.

"In plain prose, dear Mabel, you are better."

"Oh, so much better!"

"I am the more rejoiced, as you will be better able to hear what will not please you. I have made the inquiries you wished, and been as zealous, though perhaps a little more prudent than yourself. Mr. Elton, I hear, still denies his guilt, and intends to conduct his own defence, thinking by that course to awaken greater interest. I have known it succeed in some cases :—more allowances are made

—feeling claims part with judgment ; but, on the present occasion, I doubt the success of the plan, the general voice being so much against him — the circumstantial evidence so strong. Still there was no witness of the act, and a clever counsel might win him an acquittal by confusing cross questions ; and life would be much to one so young, though suspicion should rest upon him ever after. He could go to another country, and there live unsuspected. If rumour tells the truth, his father owes his life to legal wit—and why not the son ? I am sorry to say that those reports which pained your delicacy and filial love, far from diminishing, as I had hoped, are gaining ground. Some think they originated at the Grange ; but that cannot be : you can never even by a look have countenanced the idea. It is fearful to think how all, even the purest, are at the mercy of evil tongues ! That they should judge you so ill as not to know that your strongest feeling for the criminal is pity ; your most friendly desire that he should not unjustly suffer death. To think that Mabel Conyers could love her father's murderer ! my blood boils at the thought, for

my ward's fair fame is dearer than my own: but without fuel to feed on, the report will die away, or give place to some new scandal. Forgive me that I speak thus openly: you need not the warning, but my indignation is hard to be controlled. You would rather hear of the result of my inquiries. One of the points against Mr. Elton is his refusing to state where he spent the twelve hours preceding his apprehension. It is proved that he left Wexton in the morning with the avowed intention of proceeding into ——shire: yet the spot where he was taken is in exactly the opposite direction. If his course after he left Wexton could be traced, that might go far to prove his guilt or innocence. Why not be explicit if he has nothing to fear from disclosure?"

Mabel turned away from the speaker, whose look she fancied keener than usual. With all her dislike to mystery, she dared not admit her knowledge of his movements: — she saw that her words would tell against him, and was silent.

“Another extraordinary circumstance,” con-

tinued Mr. Durnsford after a moment's pause, "was the sudden death of Mr. Stanton the attorney, the very night of the murder, and the absconding of the clerk, it is said, with money and papers. There are many who trace some connexion between these events."

"I never heard of this. Could he have done it?" exclaimed Mabel quickly.

"Scarcely alone: the clerk was but a strippling, ill able to cope with my old friend. He may have leagued with another, and your suspicion be correct: a child's love sees farther than mere worldly wisdom."

"I have no ground for the suspicion, and it is not for me to judge another," said Mabel meekly, shocked at her own readiness to fix the guilt upon a stranger, that she might shield her lover.

"Be not distressed! you judge none uncharitably; and inquiries on the subject can only hurt the guilty. Of your favourite mystery (the strangers in the dressing-room)," and he smiled as he spoke, "I can learn nothing. The servants assert that they locked all the

doors, and that no one was disturbed. Will you admit it to have been a vision?"

"No! I must still believe it a reality."

Mr. Durnsford shrugged his shoulders, and gave up the point.

"Leave it to time, then, to develope all these mysteries; but, for the present, I have still stranger news,—I am charged with a message from your brother."

"Is he returned, then?" asked Mabel joyfully. "Where is he?"

"He will be here to-morrow."

"Thank Heaven!" exclaimed Mabel, the tears standing in her eyes. "That my dear father had but lived to see this day!"

"He might not have rejoiced as much as you rejoice," remarked her guardian coldly.

"Not rejoice? Have I not cause to rejoice? —to be thankful that Heaven has restored to me a long lost brother?"

"Remember — you will no longer be an heiress."

"Can you think me so sordid as to grieve at that?"

Mr. Durnsford did not smile at the indignant question of the unworldly girl; or if he did, his simple ward never found it out.

“I was but in jest, dear Mabel, and only meant to warn you that the expectations of the young are not always realised—to teach you not to expect too much. I fear,—in short, the truth must out; for, despite the years I have spent in the world, I can never play the hypocrite,—I fear you will not receive from your brother that love and protection which you have a right to expect. I am grieved to say so, but I saw enough in our short interview to convince me that he is not such as your brother should be. Do not look so shocked!—if I may not quite supply a brother’s place, I hope you have not as yet felt the want of such a relative.”

“I am not ungrateful; I feel and appreciate all your kindness,” said Mabel warmly: “but, orphan as I am, what a blessing it would be to have one so near—so dear—to love!”

“I never meant to charge you with ingra-

titude ; and you must overlook a little—a very little jealousy of this new-comer. Were he other than he is, I should not grudge him your affection : but I fear that he is little calculated to be your guide ; and you are so gentle, so loving, so bound up in those whom you regard, that he may cause you care and sorrow.”

“ So weak, so simple, as to yield to any one who will guide me ; — that is what you mean, Mr. Durnsford, though too courteous to speak it plainly,” said Mabel with a faint smile. “ Take care that you have not cause hereafter to complain of my obstinacy : you do not know how immovable I can be.”

“ Obedience is a duty to your guardian,” replied Mr. Durnsford, looking admiringly on the gentle being before him, and incredulous of her threatened immovability.

“ Not always. But now tell me of my brother. You must let me love him—there is none of our race beside. Why has he delayed his coming ?”

“ He explains the delay by his last voyage having been most unexpectedly lengthened

through wind and chance ; but I am inclined to think that he shrank from a meeting with the parent he had left. He is so altered from the fair delicate boy of bygone days, that I should not have known him ; but this is hardly strange, so many years having elapsed—just those years, too, that make the greatest change. He has seen hard times and stormy weather, so that the likeness to his poor father has completely vanished : his face is tanned—his whole appearance rendered coarse ; and a not very becoming wig makes him look several years older than he really is. He knew me the instant I rode up to the inn at Wexton, and came forward directly.”

“ Why did he not come back with you ? ”

“ I thought it better to prepare you for his visit ; and he thought so too, feeling there would be some awkwardness in the meeting, as his return robs you of fortune.”

“ He does not know me. Would that he were here now ! ”

“ You will see him early to-morrow.”

“ What did he say ? Did he send me no message ? ”

“Yes; but you must not expect anything very courteous and refined. I see you pay no heed to my warning. He hoped you would like him ;—but you must recollect that he was not much used to women, and could not always guess their fancies. In fact, his manners are strange and abrupt.”

“Like a sailor’s, I suppose : we must make allowances,” observed Mabel excusingly.

“When did you think hardly of any one, Mabel? But do not suppose me unwilling to excuse : I would—I will do it to the very utmost. I could overlook his abruptness ; but his language will shock you, if he should not take my hint and render it more fit for female ears.”

“They talk strangely at sea ; we on land do not understand them.”

“Heaven forbid that you should understand one quarter of his speech ! Sea phrases I had expected ; but he affects the landsman so completely, that he either does not use, or purposely misapplies them. I do not allude to merely incomprehensible technicalities :—

there is a boldness—a freedom in his manner which must displease a delicate female ; — his oaths perhaps he may reserve for those of his own sex. I pleaded for gentleness in consideration of your health and timidity, and hope he will rule his manner in your presence.”

“ This is sad indeed ; but old companions—old associations, may do much to soften him. My dear father—how did he speak of him ?”

“ His distress is so great at not having arrived in time to receive his blessing, and he so sincerely deplores his former rashness and disobedience, that he cannot endure to have the subject named ; nay, so violent was his emotion, that I promised not to touch upon it again, and to persuade you to the like silence. There is the difference. Your sex like to talk and weep over their sorrows—ours shun the naming them : tears are denied to us, and we shrink from the bursting heart and the burning brain that can know no relief. Yet even here your sympathy could not be perfect ; for his feelings towards Mr. Elton, the murderer,

as he plainly calls him, partakes of the violence forming a portion—a large portion, I fear,—of his character. His imprecations were dreadful:—better, for both your sakes, to make no allusion to that cruel deed.”

“Yes, much better,” said Mabel, still more earnestly than her companion, whose cheek was nearly as pale as hers.

“We will hope much from your gentleness. Painful as was the task, as your guardian, I deemed it my duty to give you these warnings; but your affection still doubts my penetration, inclining you to meet him with a sister’s love—and I would have it so. Show no distrust, and he may not give way to violence, but be softened by your gentle influence. There will not at first be the familiarity of relationship—it would not be desirable, having been always apart; and this slight degree of ceremony may keep much that could be censurable in subjection. I am not afraid of your repeating my opinion, and I shall not speak thus to others. Remember, that I am still zealous in your service—ready to guide, to please, or

to protect : and you must look on me as before, or I shall be jealous."

" Fear not ! I shall still come to you for guidance and sympathy."

" I forgot : you had better not name your vision to him, for he has strange ideas of female fancies."

" I will not mention the strangers in his presence."

CHAPTER X.

WITH no slight emotion did Mabel await the introduction to her brother. She was inclined, as most are, to judge of others by herself, and thus supposed him moved by the same thoughts which would have agitated her had she been thus returning to the home of her childhood after so long an absence and so sad a change, and meeting for the first time the sole remaining one of his race. She was thus prepared for embarrassment and feeling, more or less strongly exhibited, (concealment being foreign to herself,) and never took into account man's different nature, and her brother's early mixing with the world.

Young Philip Conyers might have felt much that she imagined, with repentance for early errors besides; but his was not the nature to let

such feelings have their way, and character his manner. Schooled by perils that might have appalled the strongest, the gentleness of youth had long since yielded to the force of manhood; accustomed to brave danger with unflinching cheek, he was not one to give way to what he would have designated womanly weakness; and his embarrassment was shown, not in its open simplicity, but by his awkward attempts to appear at ease. There are few good actors, (however deceitful man may be,) and he mistook loud tones and a startling laugh for signs of undisturbed composure. Mabel heard, long before she saw him; and there was that in his voice which jarred on her feelings.

He threw open the door with unnecessary abruptness, advancing to where Mabel sat, with hasty and enormous strides; and yet a critical observer might have seen a little inward shrinking, as his sister, who had come forward to meet him, looked up in his face. The rough greeting was unfinished, and with a blanched cheek he turned away, without proffering the kiss or embrace which he had evidently intended to bestow.

“ This is a sad meeting — and yet to me there is much of happiness in it,” said Mabel in her gentlest tones, taking on herself the office of comforter. “ To you all must seem strange and mournful now, but in a few days this feeling will wear away : I cannot tell you how I have longed for your return.”

“ Indeed !—that is very kind, since my appearance diminishes your fortune,” he stammered out, his embarrassment rather increased than lessened by her remarks.

“ Could I place gold in competition with a brother ? I, who else should stand alone—the last of a long line ?”

“ You are a good creature,” he remarked, with what some might have thought a contemptuous smile at her simplicity ; but Mabel saw it not, and resuming his confidence, he continued.

“ It does all seem strange, as you observe ; but I shall soon get over that, and we shall do very well together, I dare say. You must not mind my being a little rough sometimes ; I’ve not been used to women, and there is no need

of gentleness with men—they can keep their own. Not always, though—eh, Durnasford?” slapping him on the back; a freedom from which that gentleman recoiled with a sudden flashing of anger, as quickly subdued on meeting the speaker’s eye: whilst the speaker himself burst into a laugh so discordant as to appear unnatural, and cause Mabel to shrink from him in alarm.

“ You are nervous still, I see,” he observed with some annoyance, marking her action; “ you should ride—nothing like a long gallop to cure nervousness. I was nervous myself once, when something prevented my mounting. Only give me a good horse, and what care I for man or fiend? A swift steed and a clear road, and I have neither care nor sorrow.”

“ I thought you preferred sailing,” remarked Mabel in surprise at his sudden warmth, little short of enthusiasm; for his words, free from all embarrassment, bore the impress of sincerity.

His quick eye was fixed on her for a moment; then turning away with his former rock-

less look, he answered carelessly : " One gets tired of sailing, and likes riding better ; perhaps, because one seldom gets it. The Grange used to furnish famous horses."

" There are six as good hunters as man need have. Will you go and look at them ? Mabel cannot as yet bear much excitement," observed Mr. Durnsford, who had seemed rather fidgety during the interview.

Young Conyers assented with a readiness which proved that he was not quite so much at his ease as he wished to appear ; and the gentlemen left the room together.

And what did Mabel think of her new brother ? What she did not like to admit to herself. She would do her best to love him, as a sister should ; but there was something about him,—she knew not what, that made her rejoice in his absence and shrink at his approach. Yet the young man was what many would have styled handsome : the features were good, but their expression was bold and worldly. Days passed, and Mabel's opinion was unaltered. She tried to persuade herself that she loved her

might he have boldly

If sitting in the seat
to say, Mabel rather
seated himself opposite
slightest movement,
ness his usually rough
interest in her employment.
might. He never
bouring towns in his
not bring her a piece
elegant or inelegant,
certes his taste was
ing that he had her
tant as when near.
to which she even his
wine, to which Mr. J.
too much addicted,

opposed her wishes,—he showered money into her lap; but with that air which says,

“What female heart can gold withstand?”

Of all the maidens in merry England, there were few who cared less for gold and jewels than Mabel Conyers; and nothing but her fear of paining the donor induced her to accept his gifts. But, perhaps, the strongest proof of his desire to please her, was his abandoning the design of riding Fury, on old Ned's remonstrance, and assertion that Miss Mabel would not like it, having given express orders that no one should mount the animal but himself.

“Lauk, miss! I would not have had he ride un for some'at. Not but what he rides well; which I wonders at, for I always heard as how them sea people could not ride a bit: but to see him a galloping away on one of my poor old master's fine hunters, and the mess they comes home in — all of a foam, and scarcely a foot to stand on;—why, it makes my heart glad that

poor Dareall died afore. It is just as thof he was a highwayman, miss, and trying to break the poor animals to take to the road : and so I told un, when he said he would ride Fury. If you had but seen how he looked !—I am sure I wished I was in the great corn-bin by my side, or anywhere else out of his eyes ; and I bean't no coward neither. Howsomdever, he looked better in a minute, and axed all about Fury : but, to be sure, the rage he was in when I told un how he had been given to Mr. Elton, and all about his taming un—and how he did swear at the poor young gentleman, and declare that he would go a hundred miles to see un hanged. I never seed a man in such a way in all my life. He is no more like my poor old master than I be like you, Miss Mabel ; and sometimes, I wonders if it really is Master Philip ; he was such a fine, generous, high-spirited boy, and much handsomer to my mind, for he looked so much kinder. Then he has forgotten all his pranks when he was a lad ; and if I 'minds un of them, he looks stupid like, or else laughs so strange it don't seem

nataral. I wish as how Martha Wilford was here—she is a knowing woman. I wonder what she'd say to un. But she have been away ever since that night : strange, when she was so fond of the boy. Howsomedever, when he heard your orders, he said he would not vex you any how. That is one good thing of un ; he does seem to love you : —but then somehow he don't seem to me to be like a brother to you."

And somehow he did not seem to be like a brother to Mabel either ; certainly he did not fulfil her beau ideal of that relationship ; but then there are few realities as beautiul as the ideal. There was nothing of the playful familiarity of the brother, even after the intercourse of many days. Unused to ladies' society, at least of the higher order, he was always under some slight restraint in her presence ; a restraint which neither Mabel nor her guardian regretted, his conversation and demeanour to the female domestics being anything but suited to their ideas of propriety. Not that his manner was cold to Mabel, only awkward and embarrassed :

— she had sometimes thought it more than sufficiently warm, shrinking from his look with a terror strange in a sister willing to love a kind and attentive, though rough and unenlightened brother. Despite his kindness, there was a something about him which she could not define, that made her flush and turn pale.

All this only caused her to cling more to her guardian's protection — confide more in his watchful care: his presence was always a relief, as she fancied that her brother was then more silent and more quiet — she wished she could have added, more willing to look another way, for she never felt quite comfortable when those keen eyes with their strange expression were fixed upon her. Another circumstance which she could not explain, was his dislike to speak of the past. Instead of reciting marvellous adventures to satisfy her curiosity, he turned the subject with some awkward remark of not wishing to think of bygone hardships; or if he did by any chance make an allusion to those hardships, he checked himself on the instant,

and spoke hurriedly of something connected with the present. There was but too much reason to fear that his past had not been a past of honour or of virtue.

“When will you keep your promise and ride with me?” he inquired rather impatiently of Mabel, as Mr. Durnsford left the room.

“I am scarcely strong enough yet to ride your pace; and not having ridden so long, I shall be nervous.”

“A ride will cure you of being nervous; and I so long to have you riding beside me.”

“But I have not spirits to go far, and dread meeting any one I know.”

“The air and a good gallop will soon give you spirits. No wonder that you are low: I should be the same, cooped up as you are. You must go! What is the use of fretting for the past?—we cannot alter it. Suppose you say to-morrow. I would go to-day, but am just setting off with Durnsford to Sir Thomas Barrett’s. I hear he wants you still, though not so much since you are not to be an heiress: but he shall not have you, that I can

tell him ;—and no one else either. I mean to keep you all to myself ; you are too pretty and gentle for me to give you to another. You don't love him, do you ?" he demanded sharply, observing her draw back, for his manner was more unpleasant than usual.

" No !"

" That is right. I believe you, because you speak up so quick, though I know girls generally tell lies without number in these matters. If they call for a toast, I shall give you, for I have met with none like you in my travels : you are prettier still, now you are blushing," continuing to look at her without pitying her confusion. " It will be a fine merry party, I suspect : all good hearty fellows, with capital wine and rousing stories. Good night ; for we shall not be back till late."

" I thought you were to sleep there."

" We have decided not."

" I understood that Sir Thomas had returned to Barrett Lodge."

" So he has : — what then ? Who cares for a gallop of ten miles in the clear moonlight ?"

Ay, or without light either? I don't want too much of that—I can see in the dark.”

“Then you will take servants.”

“Not I!—only paid spies—hired informers.”

“But the road is lonely, and there are frightful stories of some highwayman, who lets no one pass without demanding money.”

“What, honest Wildfire, as they call him? A clever fellow, and a bold one too. Oh, I am not afraid of him;” and Mabel trembled at his reckless look, and the peculiar curling of his lip.

“So said another,” she observed with an unsteady voice.

“What then?—do you mean to tell me Wildfire did that? Is not the murderer in prison?—Within a month, I hope to see him dangling—footing it without a footing!” he exclaimed, bursting into a loud laugh, that sounded horrible in Mabel's ears, who sank back pale and shuddering.

“Poor thing! you are frightened,” he said, remarking her paleness. “Women are always

tender-hearted. But you wish the fellow hanged, don't you?"

"Oh! no! no!" gasped Mabel.

"Not your father's murderer? You don't love him, do you, as some say?" grasping her arm and looking into her eyes, till she closed them to shut out the horror of that look: "Answer, girl! or——"

"He did not do it! I feel he did not," murmured Mabel.

"Who do you think did do it, then?" he demanded fiercely.

"I know not!—I cannot tell!"

"How should you?" he muttered, releasing her arm from his iron grasp. "Woe to you, girl, if they speak true, and you love him! I hate him!—he shall die!" gnashing his teeth with rage.

"Say not so!" pleaded his sister with trembling earnestness.

"He shall die!" he repeated more fiercely, confirming the resolve with such fearful oaths, that, unable longer to control her emotion, Mabel burst into hysterical tears.

His rage vanished on the instant; and he knelt before her, blaming his own violence, and pleading for forgiveness with strong protestations of love and regret.

“What is this?” inquired Mr. Durnsford, with a flashing eye, entering the room equipped for his ride.

“It is, that I am a fool; vexing Mabel with my violence, when I would rather die than see her tears. Will you not forgive me?—I go not till you do.”

The still sobbing Mabel held out her hand without speaking, but withdrew it on the instant from the kisses he imprinted on it.

“We had better leave her to herself—she will recover sooner,” remarked Mr. Durnsford, evidently not well pleased.

Young Conyers complied with reluctance.

“Good-by’e. I will not worry you again, but take good care of you; and remember that you ride with me to-morrow.”

But Mabel did not ride with him on the morrow; and the unceasing rain obliged even him to admit its impossibility; nor did she

make her appearance till tea-time, keeping her room on the plea of a headache, notwithstanding her brother's frequent messages of inquiry, and the assurance that she would be quite as well in the drawing-room. Nor was the headache a mere plea — it was an unpleasant fact. The agitation of the day before had been too much for her still delicate frame;—waking or sleeping, she was haunted by the vision of her brother in his fury. She felt his grasp upon her—his gleaming eyes looking into her's with more than the power of the present:—she heard his fearful denunciation—"He shall die!" like the unchanging doom of some pitiless fiend; and her terrors increased when she considered that it wanted but a few days of the period fixed for the trial.

It was the first time that he had shown violence towards her—the first time that Edward had been alluded to, and till now believing in her lover's innocence, and hoping, as the young hope, she had looked forward to his acquittal, the discovery of the real murderer, and a friendly meeting with her brother, with a feel-

ing little short of certainty: though how all this was to be accomplished, she probably could not, if asked, have clearly explained. Here was a shock to all these hopes: she saw, as she had not seen before, the difficulty of their accomplishment.

She would have preferred remaining in her room, dreading lest her brother, in spite of his protestations, should again refer to Edward, and again give a loose to his passion; but his repeated messages made her judge it more prudent to appear, though only for a short time. Her dread of the meeting was not decreased by Mr. Durnsford's whispering, as he met her in the passage, that young Conyers had been draining the wine-cup more freely than usual; and that it would be as well for her to mingle soothing and dignity in her manner, till the business on which he had been summoned from the room being concluded as speedily as might be, he would return to play protector. Trembling at this information, she would have retreated to her own apartment for a while; but her brother had distinguished her light

step in the passage, and came out to meet her.

A wet day was a great trial of temper to country gentlemen of those days, who, little given to literature, were devoted body and mind to sporting. Young Conyers was certainly no great devourer of books; so, after he had visited all the stables and all the kennels, looked at all the horses and all the dogs, talked to all the grooms, splashed back through the wet and dirt, examined his pistols—a favourite occupation—turned over some racing calendars, and accounts of famous runs, he felt thoroughly weary of himself, and began to feel much aggrieved at Mabel's absence, particularly as he and Mr. Durnsford were not very sociable, the elder guardian having ventured on advice to his younger colleague. His sister's promise to join him at tea was therefore most joyfully received; and the impatience with which he watched for her coming was more like that of a lover than a brother. A wearying *tête-à-tête* with oneself, and oneself out of humour, is enough to excuse any im-

patience. At the sound of her step his ill humour vanished, and his manner as he advanced to meet her showed not only his delight at her presence, but the wisdom of Durnsford's hint. His eager gaze and his flushed cheek as he led her gallantly rather than affectionately into the room, and the extravagant praise which he bestowed on her beauty as he took his station near her, called up the blood into her pale cheeks, lending a brilliancy to her gentle loveliness that more than justified his admiration.

“I wonder how it is with you women;—you complain of some ache or other—keep your rooms till one is weary of waiting—and then come down looking more beautiful than ever. Confess that you were shamming to punish me.”

“I am too sincere to deceive:—my head did ache, and does ache,” she answered gravely.

“Your head ache now? How can I look and believe you less perfect in health than in beauty?—You may shake that pretty head, but there is no other like you in England. I gave you as my toast last night, though Durns-

ford looked savage, and the wild set laughed at me for toasting my sister."

"I am very sorry to hear this:—that is the last house in which I should desire to be named."

"Come, don't be squeamish, my pretty Mabel! I intend to toast you many a time yet. To be sure, the baronet did try with all his might to wheedle me out of you, thinking I had drunk too much to know what I was about. Why, I could drink twice as much as him any day, and take to the road afterwards. I told him I would not part with you, but was determined to keep you all to myself, and let no one else come near you.—But you have lost your colour all in a minute! Let me feel your pulse and prescribe.—You won't—you little prude! I have half a mind to seize the hand which you draw back so indignantly—and keep it too. What do I care for Durnsford? Psha! There now, my jesting has frightened you again! What a timid little simpleton you are, not to know that I would not harm you for all the gold won on the high road. Since

you choose it, I will cure you without feeling your pulse. Look here," holding up before her a very beautifully wrought chain; "it is bright, but less bright than your eyes—it is pretty, but less pretty than your smile. It shall be a chain to unite us — I will thus bind you ever to me;" and throwing one end round her neck, whilst passing the other round his own, he would have closed the clasp, but she put it back with a gentle dignity that restrained him, though fretting at the restraint to which he submitted. "You are a thorough simpleton! There is not another girl in the county but would jump to have it, and, let me name the terms; whilst there you sit looking red and white, timid and proud, all of a minute. What if I had stolen a kiss—my first?—there would have been no such great harm. You think you can get the chain as you please; but I am not so sure of that:—I was never made to waste my time in saying yes — and saying no — and letting others do the same."

"Indeed, brother, I have no wish for the

chain," said Mabel gently, bending lower over her tambour frame to hide her annoyance.

"As you please ! I seldom make offers twice," he replied, putting up the chain, and turning away in displeasure ; adding in a scarcely audible mutter, " Brother ! you are not very fond of your brother."

However displeased at the time, he did not long look away from his silent companion, or let her continue her occupation in peace.

"Do put by your work ! You bend so over it, that I cannot look into your face : and remember, I have not seen you before to-day."

"No very great cause for regret," she remarked without looking up.

"Yes it is, though ! I have been longing for you all day :—I shall put your work away myself," taking it from her without heeding her remonstrance. "There now, I can see you ! How beautiful you are ! the black dress setting off the fair complexion ;—yet I think I should like you better in colours. I hate everything that is dark and gloomy—but night. A merry life, and a short ! if I can—

not contrive to cheat old Nick out of a long one. Yes, you shall dress gaily when you are my——housekeeper, with jewels in plenty—a necklace for every week in the year: and you shall sit up and do nothing but love me, and smile when I look at you.”

His sister’s only remark on this folly was a glance of surprise, and an increasing gravity; supposing that he had lingered too long at the dinner-table to have a clear comprehension of his own meaning.

“You say nothing:—when shall it be, my pretty Mabel?”

“When shall what be?” she asked, trying to hide her alarm, which was increasing every moment, though she would have found it impossible to have told, if questioned, what she feared, or why she feared.

“When shall what be?” mimicking her soft tones. “Why, when shall you and I go and live together in a far country, where we may do as we please?”

“Leave the Grange!” exclaimed Mabel in surprise.

born ? or what care
yers, save the pr
little cause to love

“ Brother !” exc
dismay, such a decl
honour her ancien
thing very nearly :

“ Never look
there is no such gr
living girl, to u
graves. For the
this old house, I
main here an ho
well in the day,
with jovial comp
but at night,” as
whilst a troubled

“ Good heavens ! no ! ” exclaimed Mabel, shuddering at his words.

“ No—perhaps you do not,” he continued, pursuing some unspoken train of thought. “ You are too good !—But Durnsford—he should see and hear as I do.”

“ See and hear what, brother ? ” asked Mabel timidly.

“ Nothing, girl ! nothing ! ” he answered hurriedly, recovering his wonted manner on the instant. “ I hate this old house ! it shall be sold—sold directly ; and we will go far away : the people here are curious and prying.”

“ Sell the Grange ? ”

“ Yes, sell the Grange ! and be off and live among strangers. Don’t look so frightened, my pretty Mabel ! one would think I had threatened to sell you ; but I love you too well for that. We will not part ! let the world and Durnsford say what they may. You love me, don’t you ? ”

“ How can you doubt it ? ” said Mabel falteringly, turning away from his keen gaze.

shall we go? I want
we go to-morrow?"

"Do not ask me to
least now!" pleaded t

"Then you do not
leave old halls and do
you to go with me.
not to be trifled with
coquetry."

"Coquetry, brother

"I mean this, Mr
Grange, and go and
country? Speak, g
fiercely as she turned

answer.

"Do not ask me!"

"But I do ask yo

wish !" he exclaimed, detaining her as she rose to depart.

" You frighten me."

" So I see," he answered bitterly. " Yes ! or no ! you can say that, though frightened. I love you. Mabel, as I never loved another :— you can make me kind and gentle — you shall never find me otherwise."

" Let me go ! oh, let me go now !" entreated Mabel, shuddering — shrinking at his touch.

" Speak !" he exclaimed in a voice of thunder.

" A note from Sir Thomas Barrett, sir ; and the servant waits for an answer," said a footman entering the room at the moment.

Philip Conyers let go his grasp of his sister's arm as the door was opened, though he frowned on the servant, and taking the note, said he would ring when the answer was ready. For a moment he held the note unopened ; and Mabel, fearing a recurrence of his violence, rose to leave the room.

" Stay ! you stir not till I am answered."

“Indeed, brother, I am ill able to bear—” began the terrified girl.

“I see it !” he said more gently. “I am too rough—you must excuse it, and lay it to the strength of my affection. Compose yourself whilst I read this note: only promise to go with me, and I will be gentle as a lamb.”

Unable to contend, Mabel sank again on the sofa, a little reassured by hearing, as she thought; Mr. Durnsford’s step in the passage. Her brother opened the note; but either the writing was not very legible, or he was not well skilled in deciphering written characters—for he muttered an exclamation of vexation at the fellow’s bad writing, snuffed the candle, and then held the note towards it till the light fell full upon it, and the outstretched hand that held it. Mabel’s observation had been attracted by his exclamation:—it was not withdrawn. The outline of the hand, one of peculiar shape, was distinctly traced by the light gleaming full upon it—the sleeve of the rather ill-made coat was drawn back by the reaching

forward of the arm, and a long broad scar showed clearly out on one side of the wrist. Mabel could not withdraw her gaze, — each moment it became keener—wilder:—her brother turned hastily round,—his eyes flashed upon her;—she uttered a faint cry, and fell back insensible.

The loud calls of her brother, who, shocked and alarmed, was at a loss how to restore her, soon brought the household to his assistance; and by Mr. Durnsford's advice she was carried to her room, and left to the care of her judicious attendant. It was long before she recovered sufficiently to have a clear knowledge of the cause of her fainting: and that knowledge, whatever it might be, she did not consider herself called on to make public. Her brother, attributing her illness to his violence, reacted the repentance of the preceding day; desired that Mr. Horton should be sent for, and multiplied messages of kindness and regret. To Mr. Horton's presence Mabel strongly objected,—so strongly that the point was

yielded ; whilst to the messages, she allowed her attendant, who saw her terror of the sender, to return what answers she deemed most expedient. Sharp words passed between Mr. Durnsford and Philip Conyers : the former retired at an early hour—the latter drowned in inebriety the remembrance of his unkind and injurious violence.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

LONDON :
PRINTED BY SAMUEL BENTLEY,
Dorset Street, Fleet Street.

THE SQUIRE.

VOL. III.

LONDON :
PRINTED BY SAMUEL BENTLEY,
Dorset Street, Fleet Street.

THE SQUIRE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“THE HEIRESS,” “THE MERCHANT’S DAUGHTER,” &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1837.

THE SQUIRE.

CHAPTER I.

ON learning the next morning that Mabel, though better, was too languid to appear, Philip Conyers sought to dispel his headache and ill-humour by his favourite remedy—a gallop; and the poor animal he rode had no cause to be thankful for having been honoured by his choice.

No sooner was he gone than Mr. Durnsford proceeded to his ward's dressing-room.

“Are you really better, Mabel?” he asked with all the tender anxiety of a parent, shaking his head as he marked the deadly paleness of her cheek, painfully contrasted by the unnatural wildness of her eye.

“Are we quite alone? Can no one hear?” she asked in a low whisper, looking fearfully round the room.

“We are quite alone, and none can hear,” he replied, taking his station close beside her, after looking into the passage and the adjoining room. You were right in trusting only Parsons with your wish to see me alone; we may depend on her:—the other servants are too much inclined to favour their young master, whose free manners are more to their taste. And now what am I to hear?”

Mabel vainly strove to speak.

“Did the wretch offer insult?” he demanded with a fierceness of which she had believed him incapable, and which increased her difficulty of finding words. “Tell me, Mabel! and he shall rue it, though my life pay the penalty;” gnashing his teeth in very rage.

“What will become of me?—all are so strange!” faltered poor Mabel, with clasped hands.

“ Not strange to you ! Do not turn away in fear ! ” gently taking her hand, and calming down his fury. “ Fear not ! I will protect you ; only tell me what he said.”

“ That he would sell the Grange !—and he urged me to go with him to some distant country—away from all I loved : but his looks were more fearful than his words.”

“ Villain ! ” muttered Mr. Durnsford between his half-closed teeth. “ What said he more ? ”

“ I heed not his words ; ” looking timidly round the room, and bending closer to her guardian. “ I saw his hand, and the scar on his wrist, in the red light ; and his eyes flashed upon me, as they did that night. He was one of those who stood in my poor father’s dressing-room.”

“ No, no ! that was delirium ! ” replied Mr. Durnsford, starting from his seat with a blanched cheek.

“ It was not delirium ! I saw that hand as

I saw it then !” said Mabel in the same low hollow tone, her wild gaze fixed on her guardian, who turned away.

“ And who was his companion ?” he demanded, after some moments stopping abruptly before her, and meeting her gaze with one as keen and wild.

“ I know not ! I heed not ! but it was no delusion, as you think. I see — I feel its dreadful reality ! Oh, save me ! take me away ! Do not force me to look on him again !” stretching out her hands towards him for protection.

He heeded her not, but paced up and down the room. His manner was as kind and soothing as ever when he again took his seat beside her.

“ My poor Mabel ! look up, and fear not !” for her hands had drooped by her side, whilst her head was bowed upon her knees. “ And it was this which made you faint ?”

“ Yes ! Will you not believe ? Will you not take me from him ? I have none on earth but you to look to now.”

“Mistrust me not! I will do all things for your welfare: only do not look so wildly.”

“The orphan’s blessing rest upon you! Would that the dead were here to bless you too!”

Mr. Durnsford looked hurriedly round, shrinking as if in humility from her thanks.

“I will no longer doubt you: but for what purpose could he have been there?”

“I know not! How should I?” She paused a moment, and then added hesitatingly, “My dear father kept his money there.”

“Yes; and, as I told you, money was found there, and nothing out of order.”

“Some might have been left to check suspicion.”

“Do you know how much the cabinet contained?”

“I do not. Oh! it is fearful to imagine that my only brother—and on such a night—”

“It is not only fearful, but vain to think of these things: we are not called on to de-

nounce him—leave him to his own conscience. I fear that there are other deeds which he would little like looked into; and you have need of all your firmness. You cannot love him such as he is?”

“ I have tried to do so as a duty.”

A faint smile curled Mr. Durnsford's lip; but it passed unnoticed.

“ The question is, how to provide for your security, since to leave you longer in his power must not be thought of; but there are great difficulties in our way. As joint guardian, he has equal right, and, I suspect, equal will, to control your actions; and I know not that it would free you from his power even should you bring your charge of his having been here at night, which, I conclude, you would not do.”

“ No, no !”

“ In fact, dear Mabel, your best plan seems to be the making me your legal protector by becoming Mrs. Durnsford.”

“Is it kind to jest on such a subject, and at such a time?” asked Mabel reproachfully.

“There may be more kindness than you think, not understanding half the perils of your situation, or the difficulty of my interfering.”

“You said before, I might rely on you; yet now you shrink from interfering. I ask it not! I am neither so weak nor so helpless, but I can seek protection from Mr. Astell, or some other magistrate. My father’s memory will ensure kindness to his daughter.”

Mr. Durnsford was surprised—displeased; and there was a short silence before he replied.

“I might repeat your question, and ask, if this was kind to your father’s friend?—to one towards whom you have talked of gratitude? But I will not dwell on words which you could not have meant should wound. You cannot really doubt my wish to serve you, though, yielding to the natural impatience of youth, you think all slow that is not instant. Listen, and admit that there are more perils than you

dream of. I would spare the detail; but you will not be spared. Beyond the age when entitled by law to choose a guardian, it is more than possible that, by appealing to some magistrate—some old acquaintance of your father's, (Mr. Astell is still absent,) you might be removed alike from my tyranny and that of your brother,—that is, if he should allow you the opportunity of seeking such protection, which I doubt from our discourse last night, when high words passed between us on your account; he, as your nearest relative as well as guardian, claiming a right to your entire disposal. You tremble at his claim, and, I fear, not without sufficient cause. Allowing you to appeal for protection to a stranger,—for such from your seclusion will be almost any one in the neighbourhood;—allowing, I say, that you make that appeal, and I should rather assist than thwart you, since you are weary of my guardianship and care, on what plea could you hope to win interference against a brother,

by law and by nature your guardian, and, besides, so violent, that the matter would come to be decided by the sword, sooner than by the Chancellor? On slight grounds, no one would run such a risk; and what mighty ones would you adduce? Would you tell the world that the son, for whose return your noble father sighed—your only brother—the last male heir of your lofty race—is a blot on his high lineage, a shame to his name?—that he dare not speak of the past? and that to read it by the present, it is a tale of wrong and violence? Will you tell that on the night of your father's murder, he stood in that father's private room, in the silence and darkness of night—unknown to any—at the desk where your and his father kept his money? and then left the house, he its heir, in the same silence and mystery? Will you, Mabel Conyers, on whom he has showered gifts—will you go and tell all this? and that, too, when the eyes of curious men will

be upon you, and the cautious and the cunning will question, and cross-question, whether you will not gain by proving his guilt? Will you, I say, denounce your only brother—the last of your race, as a midnight robber—and you know not what besides? Will Mabel Conyers swear all this,—for her simple word will not suffice,—and not feel wretched if believed, or disbelieved?”

“Spare me! spare me!” pleaded Mabel, as he paused a moment to take breath; all her resolution gone.

“No, Mabel, I cannot spare you! for your own good you must hear more. If you cannot bear to tell all this of him at whose name you tremble, and from whom you seek to fly, how will you bear to speak those words that shall doom Edward Elton to a shameful death?”

“I speak those words! I doom him to a shameful death! What can you mean?” she questioned wildly.

“I mean this,” he replied, speaking with

a distinctness that gave her time to feel and understand,—“ I mean this—and mark my words. Could it be proved that Edward Elton, instead of being on his road to ——shire, according to his declaration, on the night of your father’s murder, was loitering on the way between this and Merrick’s, his guilt would be made clear. Your father was beloved and respected by all who knew him ; all are eager that justice should be done upon his murderer ; and the criminal stands without a friend—but one link wanting in the circumstantial evidence which must convict him. The report is abroad that he was seen in this village—under these windows, and heard talking with some one. Need I say whom ?” his keen eye seeming to pierce her thoughts. “ Mabel Conyers is to be summoned to speak of the events of the night of her father’s murder ;—to say if she knows aught of Edward Elton’s movements or his feelings at that time,—to swear on the holy volume, before a coarse and cruel

multitude, to speak the truth ! the whole truth ! and nothing but the truth ! You know if that evidence will fix his doom."

"He is innocent !—save him ! save him !" exclaimed the wretched girl, appalled at his statement.

A frown contracted Mr. Durnsford's brow as he looked upon her.

"Then your evidence would convict him ! He was here, and with vindictive feelings !"

"Spare me, Mr. Durnsford ! As I hope for heaven, I believe him innocent !"

Her guardian turned away, and was silent for some moments.

"Well, Miss Conyers, I have placed the perils of your path before you, such being my duty as your guardian, and now I leave you to pursue your own course: you have purposed too boldly lately, to require my assistance."

"You cannot leave me thus, with words that mock my weakness !"

“Why not? You scorned what I proposed : you thought no more of my past services, you required not my future aid.”

“Say not so ! I am not ungrateful, though I may be impatient. You will not leave me thus ?” laying her hand upon his arm, while the large tears fell unheeded.

“You ever mould me as you will ;” pressing the hand that detained him. “But if you heed not my advice——”

“I will heed your advice ; but what you said before was—could only be in jest. Take me from my brother ! I cannot stand before him and retain my reason ! that gleaming eye is on me still ! Save me from that yet more fearful summons, and I will have no will but yours.—To be questioned of that night ! to speak, when one heedless word might cause his death ! Oh ! save me, save me ! if but for my father’s sake !” wringing her hands in agony.

“Hush these terrors ! Be calm ! or I can-

not aid you. I know but two other plans, since you will not be Mrs. Durnsford. The one is, to take you at once, and openly, from this house to my own; though my power as guardian would scarcely warrant this. A duel with your brother must ensue: if I fall, you will have no protector; should he become the victim, I shall have killed the son of my old friend,—some may whisper, at the bidding of his daughter, who will thus become an heiress. Could you in honour after that receive aid or protection at my hands? Would not the stain of murder rest upon me? or would this prevent your being called on to give evidence?—Is this your wish?”

“No: if blood must flow—if death must be, it should be mine. Have you no other plan?”

“I have; but I fear that you will mock at this, as at my first. I should not propose it under other circumstances, detesting mystery and concealment as I do; nothing but those

circumstances could require or excuse it. Supposing even that I could prevail on your brother, which I know to be impossible, to let you go in peace, you would still, were your residence known, be summoned to give evidence against Edward Elton. I wish not to shield the young man : it is for you only that I care ; and, to spare you pain, I see no other alternative but your leaving the Grange this very night, unknown to any.—You start, and look disappointed : I admit that the plan has objections ; but I can devise no better. Under the plea of indisposition, you can keep your room, thus avoiding a meeting with your brother ; and I will provide for your secret departure to-night, with a trusty escort to a safe home, where I will join you, and consult as to your future proceedings, as soon as I can baffle the suspicions of young Conyers, and the would-be servers of the summons.”

Mabel shuddered at the mention of the summons still more than at the meeting with

her brother : she could devise no other plan ; and Mr. Durnsford overruling all her objections, the necessary arrangements were agreed on. Mabel pleaded for the attendance of her own maid, or old Ned ; but Mr. Durnsford raised such strong and reasonable objections, and so plainly intimated that he would withdraw his aid if not permitted to manage all as he deemed most prudent, that Mabel, eager to depart, yielded compliance with his wishes.

“ And now, Mabel, all this being arranged, I must go to provide for its accomplishment, since the time is brief, and I should join your brother as soon as possible, to prevent suspicion. Will your courage stand ? Will not your heart fail at the last moment, involving Edward Elton, yourself, and me in greater peril ? ”

“ Do not doubt me ! ”

“ Farewell, then, for the present : in a few days we meet again. You will, I know, bear patiently a deprivation of comfort which it

is not in my power to prevent, in consideration of the dangers you escape ; and you will also, I trust, acquit me of the cruelty and selfishness with which you so lately charged me. Will you think of me as of old ?”

“ Oh yes ! and you must forgive my petulance ! I shall ever regard you as a kind and considerate guardian—my father’s friend—a second parent.”

Her gratitude should have contented the most exacting, but Mr. Durnsford did not look as happy as he might have done ; yet a triumphant smile was on his lip, as he left the room, after begging her to seek that repose which she had not enjoyed during the night. They parted now in kindness and in friendship ; how would they part after their next meeting ?

Night had come—its darkness was on her path, and Mabel stood at her open chamber door listening with a beating heart to the only sounds that met her ear,—the faint echo of her

brother's boisterous laugh, who had been carousing late, and was only then seeking his apartment. All other sounds had long since died away ; and as none of the occupied sleeping apartments were at her end of the house, she concluded, after waiting a short time, that she might descend in safety. Though fearing to remain, and eager to depart, she could not thus leave the home of her fathers in silence, in darkness, and in secrecy, without emotion, and a feeling resembling shame. The perfect confidence of her young and innocent mind was gone ; she felt as a deceiver, she dreaded detection ; she did not falter in her purpose, but she drew back at every shadow, trembled at every breath. Again she listened ; even the faint echo of loud merriment had died away, and there was no longer a pretext for delay.

The parcel directed to her brother, containing all his presents, was placed in a conspicuous situation ; the small bundle, all that she could take in her hasty flight, was on her arm ;

the candle in her hand, she took one last look round the room—thought of the changes in feelings and circumstances since she had first entered it, and then passed down the stairs and along the passage with a timid and noiseless step. So silent were her movements, that none heard her pass from the place of her birth, to seek safety from the last of her race. The very dogs slept on ; and she stood by the side of her expecting guide without any suspicion of her flight. In a few minutes she was mounted on the pillion behind her conductor, and speeding on her way through byelanes, at as rapid a pace as the rugged roads would admit.

As she turned to take a last look at the Grange, backed by its lofty woods, the moon, shrouded before, shone brightly out, shedding a gentle radiance on the ancient building. It looked so beautiful in the placid light, there was such a holy calm around and about it, that for some moments Mabel regretted her

decision: a sad foreboding came across her, and she wept as they journeyed on for many a weary mile.

She had cause to thank Mr. Durnsford for his zeal in providing for her comfort as well as might be under present circumstances. At their first resting-place, (a lonely cottage on a wild heath,) a covered cart like those used by the petty travelling traders of the day, and a good strong horse, were provided for her further conveyance, with a cloak and other articles suited to the lowly station in society whose appearance, for a time, it was prudent she should assume. There was also a kind note from her guardian, urging her to make no unnecessary delay—to keep up her spirits, be as little seen as possible, and leave all to her conductor, who might be relied on.

Mabel was all obedience and gratitude; her conductor, attentive and acute, though not prepossessing; and at the close of the fourth day she arrived in safety at her place of des-

tination, an ancient dwelling-house in a lonely part of the country, long since deserted by the family to whom it had formerly belonged, and now inhabited by a farmer, who rented the surrounding land, and his pretty, simple, and kind-hearted daughter, who, apprised by a letter from Mr. Durnsford of her coming, had done her best to give her a welcome, and make the old and scantily-furnished rooms wear some appearance of comfort. Her guardian had suggested that Mabel should assume another name; but her conductor having indulged too freely in a carouse with his host, (the farmer,) let out not only her real name, but other circumstances concerning her, which Mr. Durnsford would have wished concealed; so that the pretty, simple-hearted Susan Wickham, who had often heard her mother, a native of Ranford, talk of the Grange and the Conyerses, understood quite enough to take a great interest in her gentle guest; an interest so openly expressed, that Mabel made no attempt

to deceive the attentive and sympathising girl, who, on her part, promised to maintain her secret, and serve her to the utmost of her power, so completely was she won by her gentle manner. The old farmer, whose heart was set on gain, paid little heed to the drunken conductor's revelations, thinking only of the handsome remuneration promised by Mr. Durnsford for receiving Mabel beneath his roof.

CHAPTER II.

THREE days passed, and the fourth was closing in, yet Mabel had heard nothing from her guardian, as she had hoped. She was sitting at the window looking out on the wild heath below, and the purple and golden sunset in the distance—looking as one who little heeds, when the door was pushed hastily open, and Mr. Durnsford, flushed and excited, stood before her, with signs of haste in dress and manner.

“Tell me—oh tell me, what has happened?” questioned Mabel eagerly, allowing him to take both hands in his, unheeding whether he retained or relinquished them, in her anxiety for his reply.

“First tell me that you are well, and contented with my arrangements.”

“Yes: quite well! quite contented! But speak! there is hurry and anxiety in your look.”

“Then my look does but show what is in my mind. Will you hear in patience, and decide in love?”

“Yes, yes! only first say that the trial has not taken place—that they have not pronounced the innocent guilty.”

“There has been no trial! Can you think only of the stranger, whose accusation even should keep him from your thoughts?”

Mabel drew back at his fierce frown and bitter tone. Her first fear was relieved, and she neither questioned nor answered further.

“Do you care for the safety of no other?” asked Mr. Durnsford more gently.

“I see you well; and who is there beside for whom I should care? I have no mother, and no father,—and, for a brother, I dare scarcely think of him.”

“ I would be all these to you, sweet Mabel, and something dearer still ! I am in safety now ; but I have been in peril from your fiery brother, and may be so again. Yes, and for your sake ! And yet I grudge it not ! I would do more—far more to win your love. Your brother was like a madman on hearing of your flight, and would have slain me as I stood unarmed before him, but others interposed :—he has sworn a fearful oath to have and to hold you in his power within a week. I bore with his rage—I dallied with his wrath—I resented not his insults, and all for your sake. He had no proof that I had aided your escape ; but I doubt if my pretended zeal in the search deceived him ;—nay, I know that it did not : he set spies on my movements—even now one may be on my track. You tremble, Mabel ! you turn pale,—and you have cause ! He is linked with those who have no restraint but their own wills ; he will force you away from your friends ; you do not—

you cannot know one thousandth part of the evil which you have to dread."

Mabel wrung her hands.

"Let us away to a safer retreat! Or, if it must be so, appeal to the law for protection:—surely my dread of his violence will be plea sufficient!"

"There is no retreat safe from his pursuit; banded, as I know him to be, with many whom no law can bind—no secrecy deceive. There is but one way! I have named it, but you would not heed me."

"What way?" she demanded eagerly.

"To accept and return my love! to become my bride!—Start not! faint not! What is there so fearful in the proposition? It is no sudden thought—no mere matter of convenience. I love you—I have long loved you: from our first acquaintance, I resolved you should be mine; you were blind to the truth—you saw only the kindness of a friend,—it was the devotion of a lover. Why look so strangely

and so wildly, Mabel? Is it anything so marvellous that I should love, and seek to be beloved? You deem the avowal sudden, you quarrel with the abruptness of my speech: I admit my error, but this is no time for delay: even now, your fiery brother may be at hand; even now, his arm outstretched to crush us. And what if there is strangeness in my mode of pleading? Can the heart be fettered as the mind? Or, when did true love quarrel with the method of its telling? Say you will be my bride, give that hand to me! and I will shield you from every ill, stay your tears before they fall, hush your terrors ere you give them speech!"

"Stand back! I love you not!" exclaimed the trembling girl, shocked—bewildered at this unlooked-for avowal and passionate pleading, so different from his usual modulated manner.

"Say not so, Mabel! say not those words again, if only for your own sake. Mine you must be; there is no choice—be mine in love!"

“ I repeat, I love you not !” said Mabel, more distinctly, indignant at his words, and undismayed by his rising wrath.

“ This is but maiden coyness : you would not be lightly won, yet I have no time to spend in pleading : I must rather provide for your safety, though against your will,” he replied, scarcely restraining the outbreking of his fury as he marked her decided tone and met her indignant look.

“ Take no further care, Mr. Durnsford, for my safety. Since I may not count on your friendship, I will not tax your time.”

“ Whither would you go, Mabel ?” he demanded, placing himself before her as she would have stepped from the recess of the deeply embayed window.

“ I would forth to seek from strangers the protection denied me by my father’s friend.”

“ You go not forth from this room save as my bride ! He who is to unite us will be here on the instant. I read your thoughts

—but your hope is vain,” he continued more gently, after a brief pause. “You are too timid and too gentle to withstand my power ; you cannot check the terror you would hide : even now, the firmness you assumed is failing, your woman’s dignity is melting into tears. Vainer still your hope to find a friend in him who shall unite us. Think you I would call to my side, at such a time, an open foe or a doubtful friend ? one who could be turned by woman’s prayers or woman’s bribes ? I know that which would bring him to the gibbet ; and he dare not refuse my bidding. Think of all this before you speak : I would not hear harsh words from you. Leave this you shall not—save as my bride ; return to the Grange you cannot—except as my wife ; the tongue of slander is already busy with your name : —the finger of scorn would point at you—the mark of shame be read upon your brow. You will not credit this ? Now think ! You left your brother’s house in secret, and at

night, with a worthless character, for such was your conductor; you travelled days with him, and without a female attendant. Slight as is your knowledge of the world, you must know what that world will say—does say—to all this.”

Mabel gasped for breath; and the speaker paused, dreading the effects of the emotion he had excited:—at length she spoke.

“ I see ! I feel ! and yet you—you urged me to do this ! ”

“ I did ! knowing that that act made you my victim ! ” he replied triumphantly, stung by her reproach. “ You are mine now, you cannot escape ! Save as my bride, you can never again return to the world.—But look not thus, dear Mabel,” he continued, changing his tone on the instant, touched by her speechless agony ; “ look not thus. I still ask you to be mine in love : your reproaches, your decision, shall be forgiven—forgotten ! I have painted the dark side, now let me limn the bright. I offer

the care and affection of a devoted heart ; security from your brother, since, as my wife, he cannot claim to rule you ; the restoration of your fair fame—for all know that Richard Durnsford would not wed with levity ; and lastly, the Grange for your home. Think of all these things, and make a wise decision. I was not always hateful to you. Yield to the devoted lover !—brave not the determined wooer ! Speak ! I wait your award.”

For some moments Mabel was silent, and the lover’s hopes rose higher. She turned towards him—a faint glow came on her before pale cheek : she, too, had hopes. She spoke in no cold and measured tone, but with the sudden outburst of a gentle, generous heart, that would not credit evil of one it had esteemed,—that would rather owe its happiness to a noble and voluntary reparation than to a forced and unwilling compliance.

“ I have esteemed and loved you as a friend ;

oh, let me do so still ! Force me not to believe such evil of you as that with which you charge yourself ! If you have erred, now is the time to repair the error ; let me owe to your generous forbearance safety and happiness. Many turn to wrong—few return to right : I would still esteem you ; my feelings towards you will be what you make them—they rest on your own acts. I am an orphan—would you make me still more desolate ? I am helpless—would you crush me with your power ? I am in sorrow—would you make my life a life of hopeless misery ? I ask for pity, and will you be pitiless ? As my father's friend—that friend whom he most loved, and served, and trusted, and by his memory, I implore your pity for his child !”

“ Name him not !” interrupted her listener.

“ Yes : in his name I claim forbearance ! I adjure you to reparation ! I entreat you not to persist in wrong ! By your hopes of peace

on earth, of bliss in heaven, I implore you, pause! You tremble, you are softened at my words: I am not without a protector; my father's friend will save his child."

"It cannot be!" said Mr. Durnsford, gazing admiringly on the lovely girl, bright in her high hopes. "Your pleading will be vain!" he added, seeing her about to remonstrate and entreat. "Your words but fix my resolve! your touching appeal but confirms my decision! You are too beautiful! I cannot yield you to another. Beautiful even now, when the splendour of high hopes has died away, and the eye is dim, and the cheek pale, and the hands clasped in hopeless agony. Yes: mine you shall be! mine by the marriage bond with vow and ring, though hell should yawn beneath me as I speak the words. I would not frighten you: be mine in love, and I will be all kindness and all gentleness."

"I cannot love!—I would not hate you!"

"Hate? dear Mabel! there shall be no

such word between us; you will yet learn to love."

"Never!"

"Beware! Try me not too far: you have never seen me as I am."

"Even now I see you as you are, the basest of the base!"

"Have a care!" he exclaimed, writhing beneath her scorn. "Base, or not base, you shall love me yet."

"Can tyranny win love?"

"It can its seeming;—and it shall! And why do you love me not?"

"Dare you ask?"

"I dare! but bid you pause ere you reply. Why do you love me not?"

"It is the truth; let that suffice!"

"Ha, girl! you tremble! you dare not say you love another!"

Mabel was silent; she dared not speak, she trembled as he said. His eyes glared upon her, and his lips were livid as he spoke.

“ You do well to be silent ; but I will tell what your modesty would fain conceal. You do love another ! you would wed another ! that other is Edward Elton ! I warn you, girl, you shall be in your grave rather than wed with him. Nay, turn not away ;” and he held both her hands in his ; “ you shall hear me—you shall look upon me. I hate—I abhor him ! I will pursue him even unto death. I cannot breathe in peace the while he lives. I hate all his race ! I have done them grievous wrong—I will do them worse. His father crossed me in my youth ; and he lived to rue it ! I beggared him—I drove him from the haunts of man—I parted him from her he loved—I made him curse the wife he doted on, the friend he trusted. I planted in his soul the barbed and poisoned arrows of suspicion. When do the wounds they give forget to rankle ? I crushed the hopes of his fair bride ! She had refused my suit !—I saw her agony, and was avenged ! This was my

doing!—mine! Yet my name is fair, the synonym of honour — the pledge of integrity. Who dares to brave me? I thought the father and his puling boy were in the grave: they live—live to feel my power, and to own it. The father crossed my suit, and was an outcast! The boy has crossed my love, and he shall die a scorn and spectacle! his name, a name of infamy! his death, a death of shame!”

“He shall not die!” cried Mabel wildly, as though her assertion could avert his doom, yet bowing her face on the hands he held, to avoid looking on his almost fiendish rage, whose sudden outburst was little calculated to win to love, however it might alarm into submission.

“He shall die, though my bride weep his death!” was his reply, poured into her ear with horrible distinctness.

For some moments he gazed in silence on the desolate being before him, whose successive

shudders, as her face rested on the hands he held, alone told her agony ; but he could not thus gaze and feel no pity. He blamed himself for this useless yielding to his rage, and sought to calm her, though still availing himself of her alarm.

“ Why would you force me to this harshness, Mabel ? Let it pass from your mind. If I would have wooed in former days, it was with other feelings than I would woo now. There was interest and vanity then : I loved not his mother as I love you. Despise not the devotion which I again offer to your acceptance.”

Mabel shrank back in disgust, and his tone lost its softness.

“ Look you ! I will make one more offer ; reject it at your peril, and at his : if I loved you less, I should not heed your scorn. Be mine, and I forego my revenge :—then he shall not die.”

“ You give yourself to me, dear Mabel,”

he continued, after vainly pausing for a reply.

“ No ! God will protect the innocent ! ”

“ Nor earth nor heaven shall protect him ! His doom is fixed—and yours ! Further parley would be vain : within an hour you become my bride.”

“ Never ! ” said Mabel firmly, but gently, raising her sad pale face, and meeting his fierce look unmoved.

“ Never ? Who shall prevent it ? Even now I hear the coming of him who shall unite us. He will not falter ! I shall not falter ! You may call, but there are none to hear ! you may weep, but there are none to pity ! The words shall be said, and two be made one ! the reluctant maiden shall become a bride, and obey, if she will not love. What can your feeble strength effect ? It cannot even free your hands from mine. How then will you resist me ? ”

“ Not in my own strength ! not in my own power ! In the eyes of the strong man I am feeble as the flower which he crushes beneath his foot ; in the eyes of the worldly man I am helpless, for I have none on earth to look to : but the strong and the worldly are but as nothing before the Mighty One, who hath said to them who trust in Him, ‘ I will neither leave thee nor forsake thee ! ’ ”

There was silence for some moments ; the wicked was abashed. She had made no attempt to release her hands, though his fierce grasp was painful ; she had admitted by look and word her utter helplessness—she had made no effort to conceal it, no endeavour to deny it ; she used no threat of earthly power ; she spoke not of earthly vengeance ; she stood alone without an earthly protector, and she felt and owned it. She was in the grasp, and, to human judgment, in the power of the wicked—too bold to pause, too cruel to re-

lent! She felt this, yet she faltered not; she was in the hands of Him who

“Sleepeth not, and slumbereth not;
But guardeth them who love.”

Her simple faith was beautiful; and he, who feared not man, shrank before its sublimity.

“Oh that I had learned such faith—that I dared feel such trust!” were Durnsford’s murmured words as he turned away.

“Repent, and pray! It may not—it will not be too late to turn from evil.”

He looked on the earnest and compassionate pleader.

“No! it is too late!” he muttered. “You do not know—you cannot guess the guilt upon my soul.”

“Say not it is too late—your guilt too much. Think but of Him who came to seek and save: think——”

“Cease, Mabel, I command you! Harrow not my soul with the thoughts of a hereafter.”

There is no judgment, there is no hell, there is no heaven. I will not trust such idle tales. There is no Ruler!—or he is blind and cannot see—deaf and cannot hear! Else why doth crime stalk unrebuked, whilst the guiltless perish? Men have lived, and men have died; millions have gone down into the grave, but who hath yet returned to tell its secrets? It hath no secrets! Here we live and breathe—have hopes, desires: there we are as nothing—as if we had never been! Why not then work our will on earth? To whom must we account? You are shocked! it matters not. With such a creed, you cannot hope to turn me from my purpose, but the firmer for your lofty faith, and the glory it hath shed around you. Mine you shall be! Let Him you trust deliver you!”

“In his own good time He will.”

“Let Him hasten then, for the priest comes. Will He strike me down at your feet? will He tear you from my grasp?”

“He will use the means that may seem best to Him, as He will choose the time,” answered Mabel, shocked at his mockery.

“By a miracle, as in the olden time, sweet Mabel? Your beauty merits that: it grows brighter and brighter as I gaze.”

“Tempt not the Almighty by this mockery; He can turn the hearts of men to work his will, making them his means and instruments.”

“Ha! think you He will turn me? Again I warn you that you know me not; that you guess not of what I have been—of what I may be capable.”

“I can, and do believe you capable of any deed—even of—” She stopped abruptly, whilst a shiver shook her frame; yet, as though fascinated, she continued to look into his fierce eyes, which were glaring wildly on her.

“Even of what do you believe me capable? Speak! I command you!”

Mabel spoke not, but with a sudden effort withdrew her hands from his rough grasp, and

covered her face to shut out that fearful look which confirmed her suspicion.

“Behold him who is to unite us,” said Mr. Durnsford triumphantly, as some one knocked for admittance.

He was mistaken; it was only the farmer, who retired on delivering a note, which Durnsford turned to a window to read. Its contents were not pleasant.

“Stay, Miss Conyers,” said her guardian, interposing between her and the door.

“Let me pass, Mr. Durnsford! surely there has been enough of cruel mockery to content you for one day.”

She did not look up, and spoke more in sadness than in anger.

“It would be wise to use gentler words, as your fate is in my hands; but I will overlook this. If I urge my suit no more to-night, will you meet me to-morrow as a loving bride?”

She looked at him, then at the crushed

note, and guessed that necessity, not pity, prompted his proposition.

“Neither to-morrow nor ever, Mr. Durnsford : I will not deceive you.”

“You shall rue this obstinacy ! you will take no warning, you find pleasure in braving me to do my worst.”

“Not so ! I pray you to let me pass : I am shocked—I am faint, and would fain be alone.”

He was touched by her gentleness, and saw that she spoke but the truth, that she leant against a chair for support.

“I will not detain you now, then ; but you will see me again to-night ? I would make excuses for my violence.”

“Not to-night ! leave me in peace till to-morrow.”

“Be it as you wish ! You should never rule me thus, would you only wear even but the semblance of affection : I urge you no more till to-morrow. And you will be grateful for my forbearance ?”

“ I am most thankful !”

Mr. Durnsford walked by her side. “ You think I have been harsh,” he said, as they reached the door of her apartment. “ I will not deny it ; I must have been, to give you cause to weep : but you cannot understand the feelings—the passions of our sex. You guess not how I love you !”

“ Let us not recur to the past ; I am ill able to bear further discussion.”

“ I see and deeply regret it ; but will you not promise to think kindly of me ? to believe——”

“ You promised me peace till to-morrow,” said Mabel, interrupting him, and turning the handle of the lock.

“ I did !” he replied ; “ but may I hope no favour ?”

“ Good night, Mr. Durnsford,” she said, turning away without taking his proffered hand.

“ Good night, Miss Conyers. I would, for your own sake, that we had parted with more courtesy.”

“ I would that we had never met !” thought Mabel, closing the door in silence.

The next instant she heard him lock it on the outside and take out the key. She trembled at the sound : she would have trembled more, had she ventured to look up as they parted, or had she heard his muttering as he walked along the passage. She listened to his departing steps ; and when they had died away in the distance, and no further exertion was required, she sank on a chair, giving way to a passionate burst of tears.

He whom she had esteemed, had bared his villany before her ; and she now doubted not that he had been one of the two who had looked upon her in her father’s dressing-room. The fierce gleaming of those eyes had never been forgotten ; they had thus gleamed on her again that very evening. She could not doubt, she could not disbelieve, and she wrung her hands as she thought of his will and his power to work her harm. Alas ! for our erring faith, we doubt and sigh, when we should hope and trust.

There was a slight noise at the further end of the apartment,—the noise increased,—the door of a closet opened ;—but before she could scream, Susan Wickham stood before her, with her finger on her lip. The kind-hearted girl, approaching on tiptoe, knelt before Mabel, and taking her hands in hers, begged her not to look so sad and wild, as she was come to provide for her escape.

Mabel started into energy with renewed hope at the words ; but she bowed her head in shame as she thought of her late mistrusting fears.

“ Bend down your ear and listen, for I cannot stay, and must not be overheard,” said Susan in a whisper. “ I know that Mr. Durnsford would make you his wife, for, as he passed up to you, he told father and I that we must be the witnesses : but Parson Wilkins can’t come to marry you till to-morrow ; and if you wish it, with the blessing of God, you shall be far away by that time. You do wish it, miss, don’t you ?”

“ Yes ! yes ! ” cried Mabel eagerly.

“ I thought so, from some words I overheard, and when I saw how he walked by your side whilst you turned away, and when he locked your door. Perhaps, Miss Mabel, you loves some one else ? ”

A deeper blush was her only answer.

“ I thought as much ! ” exclaimed the girl, delighted at her own sagacity. “ And it would be a hard and a cruel thing to be forced to marry one, when you loved another. I would not marry any but Ralph Preston, let them do what they would.—But I must not waste time talking here, for I may be called, and something ’spected ; though nobody knows of the door I came in at,—it looks so little like a door on the other side, and there is so much lumber heaped up before it. Now, if you will go through there when it’s got dark, and along the gallery till you come to the end, and down the little winding stairs, and up the passage, and into the third room on

the right hand, and on through the next till you come to the glass-door, you will be into the garden in no time. Then you must go along the left-hand path in the shrubbery, till you come to the door in the wall by the great fish-pond ; and just outside you will find a horse and pillion, with an honest lad who will take care of you and place you with your friends."

"Can you—will you indeed do this?"

"To be sure, ma'am. I'll tell Ralph, that if he says no, or makes a fuss, I'll not walk with him again for a year. What would he say, I should like to know, if father or any one else was to make me marry Joseph Crook?—who wants me, I can tell him that."

"I do not doubt your powers of persuasion," replied Mabel with a smile ; "but where is this Ralph? and can he be there in time ready with a horse?"

"He shall!" said his mistress decidedly ; in truth, Susan rarely permitted any obstacle

to stay her plans. "I'll just step down to the village to take some eggs I promised to Goody Barnes: I said I was going there afore, and somehow or other Ralph is always in my way; I think he must set some one to watch me. There is plenty of time, for you must not go till after nine, or some of the people about may see you. Are you bold enough to venture? To be sure, the ghosts don't walk so early," looking half alarmed as she named them, "and you must not be much later, 'cause father sometimes takes it into his head to lock the doors himself; but then you must pass by where Mr. Durnsford will be sitting, and I can't go with you for fear I should be missed, though I will be somewhere handy if I can manage it."

"I am not afraid of ghosts;—but is there no other way than by his room?"

"None that you can go. Mind, the third room on the right side, and through to the next: I'll take care that the doors shall be

open. And now, ma'am, if you would excuse me, I have little to offer; but, perhaps, you may not have money with you," putting a small purse into Mabel's lap as she spoke. "Don't be offended, ma'am; you may want it on your journey, and it is my own for eggs and chickens. Not that Ralph will want anything, or take anything either;" her cheek glowing with honest pride; "but he may not be able to go all the way himself; though if not, he will take care to get some one he can trust to go on with you. He would not dare to see my face if he did not; and he would do it of his own will too, for there never was a kinder heart to man and beast,—yes, and woman too,—though I say it, as should not say it."

"I will not doubt it," said Mabel, smiling through her tears. "Take back your money—I have plenty; but I do not thank you the less. I cannot say to you one half I would for your kindness to a stranger."

“Don’t try, ma’am,” said Susan, crying for company. “I can’t think of you as a stranger: my poor mother used to talk so much about your family.—But, la ! there is the clock striking, and I ought to be at the farm down in the valley there.”

The girl started to her feet, repeated her instructions with a few additions, and bade her good-b’ye with many kind wishes, it being considered most prudent that they should not meet again.

Mr. Durnsford himself brought cake and wine with some of Susan’s delicacies to Mabel’s door, which she opened at his request, not wishing to irritate him unnecessarily ; but her thanks were cold—her good-night colder still, and he departed little pleased with her manner, locking her in, and taking the key with him as before.

CHAPTER III.

THE time so anxiously waited for by the prisoner at length arrived. Susan had promised to return should any unforeseen circumstance interfere with their plans: she had not returned; and Mabel, the timid, the gentle Mabel, who a few months since shrank from man's look and coloured at his words, was preparing to commit herself to the care and guidance of a perfect stranger—to go forth with him on a long journey at the dead of night—to decide and act for herself—to seek protection from one whom she had seen but once—most probably to appeal to the laws against the tyranny of a brother and a guardian. She stood on the narrow stair looking

down the long passage at its foot, yet the flame scarcely flickered from the trembling of her hand ; and she started not when the ominous owl flew by, screeching as he passed. Her simple faith had returned in all its beauty. She knew but little of the evil hearts of men, and thus feared them less ; she knew Mr. Durnsford to be a bold, bad man, but she did not judge of his kind by him. Her real danger overpowered all imaginary terrors, the result of her early seclusion : her desire to fly from her worthless guardian, and the threatened marriage, absorbed every minor fear, and supplied the energy required. Had she been more suspicious, and less confiding, her danger would have seemed to her far more appalling : the single-hearted and the gentle often win their way, when the strong and the politic are turned aside.

There was no sound in the passage below ; and the light gleaming through the crevices of the closed door of the sitting-room on the

dark floor without, convinced her that Mr. Durnsford was within. Gathering her cloak closely round her that it might brush nothing in her way, shading her candle lest its flame should betray her, and treading with a light and timid step, she passed the door of the dreaded room, and entered the first of the apartments at the other end of the passage through which she could alone gain entrance to the garden. Believing her greatest danger passed, her enemy left behind, she advanced towards the second room without any particular scrutiny, and with a less cautious tread; but stopped abruptly, before she could be seen through the open door by the speaker within.

“Who is that?” demanded the well-known voice of the dreaded Durnsford.

“Me, sir!” exclaimed the ready Susan, advancing from an adjoining closet into which she had retreated to avoid his observation, on her return from ascertaining that the door

into the garden was open, taking the light from Mabel's trembling hand as she passed before her, and pointing significantly to the hiding-place from which she had herself but just emerged.

Before Susan, who made a trip and a scuffle on the polished oaken floor, that would have almost smothered the trampling of a troop of horse, was standing before Mr. Durnsford, the terrified and half-bewildered Mabel was safely enclosed within the closet, listening with breathless eagerness to the succeeding conversation.

“Are you so very honest hereabouts, Susan, that you leave the doors open at night?”

“Honest?—la, sir! I should hope so: there has not been a robbery since I recollect. Besides, the door only goes into the garden, so we don't care about its being fastened, for there ain't much to steal in the house, though father do go round most nights to see all safe. Let me do it, sir; you ain't used to the lock—it goes with a snap;” and, putting down her

candle, she stepped before him, making such a racket with the key, pretending to try the door to ascertain its being fast, that, weary of the noise, and desiring her absence, he gave her some trifling order to ensure her instant departure. Susan would fain have lingered to be certain that he did not fasten the door more firmly ; but prudence forbade, and she retired, though determined to be on the watch. No sooner was she gone, than Mr. Durnsford continued his search in an old chest of drawers, from which he took a packet of papers, left there by mistake some months before, and of which he thought it prudent to repossess himself, though they had not been of sufficient consequence to induce him to take any previous steps for their recovery. He had just entered the outer apartment with the intention of returning to the sitting-room, when the clatter of boots and spurs was heard ; and, flushed with wine and excitement—splashed, heated, and in no placid mood, Philip Conyers, seeing

a light, threw open the door and advanced towards him.

“ I am no laggard, as you see ! Ha ! ha ! you did not think I was on your track.”

Mr. Durnsford started with no pleasurable surprise, and inquired the cause of his visitor's appearance.

“ What am I come for ? Why, to marry the pretty Mabel, and save you the trouble : you are too old for such a fancy. I met Wilkins by the way, who thinks I shall make the fitter bridegroom, and has promised to be here betimes to-morrow. It is of no use to frown or argue : I know all from the man who brought her here. I suspected what you were before ; though there is honour among thieves, they say. You know me : if I like a thing, I take it ;—the girl pleases me, and she shall be my wife.”

“ She is your sister !”

“ Psha ! you know all about that. Play the guardian, give her away quietly and de-

cently, and I won't say anything of your treachery : if not, I can tell what would hang you, or drive you out of the country ; and I shall stand on no ceremony now, since you would have deceived me. It is of no use to bluster—my mind is made up ;” throwing himself with a resolved air into one of the old high-backed chairs that stood a few paces from Mabel's place of concealment.

“ I am not given to bluster ; and if it comes to telling what should be kept secret, there are two may play at that, and time show which shall win,” replied Durnsford, galled at his inferior's insolence, and too much irritated at his inopportune arrival to employ his usual insinuating arts : moreover, since his parting with Mabel, he had been drinking to drown thought, and was little less excited and inclined to anger than his companion.

“ When knaves fall out, honest men may get their rights ! If we play that game, the

odds are in my favour," observed Philip Conyers sarcastically. "I am used to roaming the country—like the road as well, or better than the drawing-room; there is more fun and no yawning: whilst you must sit on soft cushions, and flatter, and be flattered. I say — Stand! and deliver! boldly, as a brave man should. You coax, and palaver, and play the friend; and gold and lives go no one knows how. I say the girl shall be mine!" striking his hand on the arm of the chair.

"And I say she shall not!" replied Durnsford with a fierce stamp of the foot.

"Who will prevent me? It will not do for you to play guardian here: I am guardian too."

"And, brother, remember!" observed Mr. Durnsford, scarcely restraining his rage.

"I, Philip Conyers!—the pretty Mabel's long-lost brother! — the heir of the good Grange! That was capital!" shouted the un-

welcome guest, bursting into a fit of laughter so loud and hearty, that the old walls echoed to the sound. "That was a good hit of mine, though you sulked about it for a week, and only agreed because I threatened to blow you up and fly the country. I played the part well, to every one's satisfaction but yours, who wanted all the picking to yourself; but I shared the danger, so had a right to half the profits. To be sure, I was hard put to it sometimes, when the old greybeards expected me to own to mischief which I had never done. You fancied that I could not play the squire; but you see I did, and was as much a gentleman as others."

"This is the first time of my hearing so," replied Durnsford drily. "I doubt if Mabel considered you very gentlemanly."

"Oh, the pretty Mabel! but then she is like a butterfly—can scarcely bear to be looked at; or a wild fawn—so shy and timid. To think of the simple one taking all my love-

speeches for a brother's good manners ; and only blushing and being a little startled now and then at she did not know what ! She will learn better to-morrow. Or why not to-night ? I am just in the humour for making love. Where is she ?" starting up as he spoke.

Poor Mabel feared that they would hear the beating of her heart, so strongly did it bound against her side.

" You shall not see her to-night," replied Durnsford firmly, placing himself before the door.

" Shall not, Richard Durnsford ? Who stops Wildfire, though he stops many ?" and again he laughed at the thought of his various exploits in his character of highwayman.

" Sit down, and hear reason," said Mr. Durnsford, compelling himself to moderation. " Miss Conyers has already suffered much ; and my word is pledged that she shall not be further distressed to-night."

“ You wooed in vain : ” sneered Wildfire, the famous highwayman, — for such he was. “ You wooed, but the pretty Mabel did not fancy you for her husband : I admire her judgment ; she will find me more to her taste.”

“ Come, come, Hudson ! the jest has been carried far enough. You frightened Mabel so the other day, there was no peace till I promised to send her away ; so little wonder that she does not wish you to be at her wedding : but since you are come, play the brother quietly to-morrow — give her to me, and you shall find your advantage. The hunters——”

“ Pooh ! The hunters are mine anyhow, as her brother or husband, with or without your leave ; but I am tired of playing the brother, so you must tell her that I am no such thing, as you told her that I was.”

“ If I should, she would only fear and detest you still more than she does already.”

“ Fear and detest me ? That is your doing, then, and you shall answer for it.”

“ It was the consequence of your own violence : I warned you to no purpose.”

“ You never warned any one in honesty yet : but I cannot think that the pretty Mabel hates me, and would rather stand your fire than hear her say so. I never cared for a woman’s frown before ; but I took to her that very night in the old house, when she came—just where she should not. She looked so pretty and delicate, though as white as wax, when we carried her back to her room, and she none the wiser, thanks to the composing draught you found, and poured down her throat when she was coming to herself again. A capital plan of yours, I must say ! and well for her and us that she fainted without screaming—few would have been so sensible : but she must give up fainting altogether as my wife. She little thinks whose acquaintance she made that night.”

“ You are mistaken ! she knows it was her hopeful brother Philip Conyers,” observed Durnsford sarcastically.

“ And her trustworthy guardian Richard Durnsford !” retorted the other with an oath. “ Did you tell her that too ? or must I do it ?”

“ I told her nothing : on the contrary, even to the last I persisted that she was labouring under some strange delusion ; but she recognised your hand, when holding up a note, by its shape and scar.”

“ The baronet’s note !—and that frightened her out of her senses. Hang the note ! and the light, and the writer !—all but the pretty Mabel herself, and her husband that is to be. I remember I was holding up some of the jewels taken out of the drawer, just as she discovered us. That was a strange piece of work altogether ; I have never been quite myself since. It was the first time there was blood on my hand without my spirit being

first roused by anger ; and the old squire died bravely. If he had but said at first that the money and jewels were not about him, instead of shouting it out so triumphantly at last, all might have been well. I think more of his death than of all my other ill deeds put together, though I have got more by it. I could not look at his daughter and salute her, as a brother should have done, for the thought of her dying father, and his grey hairs dabbled in his blood. I could not even take her hand—the brave old fellow was before me standing between us, and I was forced to turn away. I have never slept so well since. I start up in my bed and grapple with him ; or I feel his cold, clammy hand fitting the halter round my neck, his glassy eye fixed upon me all the time.—I never could bear the Grange ! He used to walk before me, as if showing the house, leaving a track of blood behind him ; and there was a mocking smile upon his lip I did not like.”

“Why would you persist in entering the house, then? . A pity, with such delicate sensibilities, that you should subject yourself to such inflictions!” remarked Durnsford with a sneer.

“Have a care!” replied Wildfire fiercely. “I am no more a woman than yourself: but I do wonder how you could gripe the old man’s throat without a shudder, as you did;—you, who had known him for so many years—sat at his table, and drank of his cup; or how you could so play the hypocrite to his sweet child, and not turn away from her trusting look, when you knew that you had murdered her poor father. I am a villain! and I know it!—but then I am a bold and open one, and would not change crimes with Richard Durnsford, though he offered me a whole stud to boot.”

“There are some swords double-edged; and it is ill policy to play with them. I was no more Conyers’s murderer than yourself. You fired first!”

“ So I did ; but aimed only to disable him ; for I liked the squire’s honest character, and wished him no further harm than losing the legacy which we wanted. You did the rest ; and I saw in the moonlight, when even I shook, a ghastly look of triumph on your face, as though that deed secured to you his daughter and her gold. My ball only partly disabled him, as I intended ; but you—his friend !—had doctored his powder the day before !—you struck !—you dragged him from his horse !—your knee was on his chest—your hand upon his throat !—Faugh ! I would as soon be the hangman as Richard Durnsford !”

“ I had no alternative when the mask fell from my face and he shouted forth my name,” answered Durnsford, his lip quivering with rage at his confederate’s scornful schooling. “ Why did you compel me to go with you, after boasting a thousand times that you feared no single man ?”

“ Who says I do ?—though the squire was

neither child nor coward. Why should I run all the risk and not get half the profit? The world calls you honourable, but I know you! You would have had me hanged for the robbery, pretending to be my friend till the last moment, and kept safe yourself; but I knew better than that! I have had my doubts whether you did not know before we attacked him, that the legacy was in the cabinet; but sought his death to be sooner guardian to his heiress."

"Think as you please! Had I known that I could have got the legacy without your aid, I should not have committed myself by taking to the noble profession of the road."

"Better highwayman than hypocrite!" retorted the other in defiance. "There is reason in what you say, though; but it was a bad business altogether. I did not mind trying to finish the lad, his son, just to please you, as he had affronted me, making a fuss about a girl who chose to squall be-

cause I was civil ; but hurting the squire went against me. It is womanish, but I have a fancy it will be my last exploit, and that I shall hang for it. If I do, I hang not alone !” looking keenly at Durnsford.

“ With such fancies, how can you think of marrying the daughter ? I am a man ! and have no such thoughts.”

“ I am as much a man as yourself—can bear as much, and brave as much. I love the girl, and she shall be mine ! Besides, I would save her from wedding Richard Durnsford.”

“ She will know how to appreciate such disinterested kindness. Hers will be a happy fate, to see her brother, alias husband, hanged for her father’s murder !”

“ There will be one comfort : she will see her worthy guardian the same.”

For some moments the confederates glared upon each other in silence ; then Durnsford spoke in a more conciliatory tone.

“It is unwise in us to quarrel: let us agree, as friends, on our future plans.”

“Friends? Now I do mistrust you, Richard Durnsford, with that smoothed brow and held-out hand. I feel as if the constable were behind you with the fetters—the hangman with the rope.”

How galling to a spirit such as Durnsford's to be schooled—mocked at—bearded as he had been—and was! The highwayman by his open boldness placed himself above, and beyond the hypocrite's power: if once resolved on a point, he rarely failed to accomplish it. He would listen to nothing but his own will; bearing down all opposition by his unreasoning obstinacy.

Mr. Durnsford guessed, and guessed correctly, from his strange and varying mood, that the highwayman had sought strength from exciting draughts to enable him to support the great fatigue he had encountered in his hasty pursuit; and most heartily did he wish

that those draughts had been deeper still: he might then have been managed; now he was only more irritable, suspicious, and determined. Nor was Mr. Durnsford unaware that his own draughts to drown reflection and remorse ill fitted him to pursue his usual politic and successful line of conduct. He felt he had been unwise in showing his anger, whatever the provocation, (and it had not been slight,) and sought to repair his error. But this was not so easy: he, too, was inclined to be irritable and obstinate; and the mind's irritation would occasionally show forth in words, though he began with a gentle tone and unclouded brow.

“Come, come, Wildfire! the fetters and the rope are for petty villains; not for such a fine, brave fellow, as Thomas Hudson! You shall keep the roads with no trifling salary for many a long day yet; though perhaps it might be as well to expend your cares on some other county, as no one carries money here-

abouts, lest Wildfire should take it without giving receipt or bond. Come with me to the sitting-room ; we will have a merry night, and to-morrow make terms which even you shall call handsome, though you have been rather hard upon me lately."

" That is, make me drunk—lock me up—marry the girl, and be off in the morning before I know anything of the matter. I knew the smooth brow and held-out hand were not for nothing. I won't stir—and I won't drink — that is positive ! And these are my terms—the pretty Mabel for my wife, with all the hunters, and half her fortune. Talk as you please, I shall not change."

Durnsford gnawed his lip with vexation, but rallied to the charge.

" Where have you learnt to make bargains ? or why do you take me for a fool ? Give up the wife—she would be only an encumbrance to you in your way of living—and you shall have the hunters and a third of her property."

“No ! I have said it ! I have some thoughts of giving up my wild ways, and settling down somewhere as a magistrate, when I have a pretty wife to keep house.”

“A magistrate ?”

“Why not ? There shall be no highwayman in my county, depend upon it. I shall have a wife, a fortune, and a character to take care of then : now, having neither, I may do as I please.”

“Set a thief to catch a thief,” remarked Durnsford sarcastically.

“A wise saying ! but a bold gentleman, who keeps the roads with his blood horse and his pistols, is not to be confounded with a paltry thief, who skulks along dark passages in listed shoes, scaring women and children.”

“The distinction must be obvious to all. You will be merciful to those of your profession ?”

“I suppose I shall do justice, as others do,—hang the little villains, and set the great

ones, loose :—let hypocrites hope nothing at my hands ! Do you agree to my terms ?”

“ Impossible ! you only named them in jest ; Miss Conyers would never consent.”

“ Miss Conyers shall consent,” retorted Wild-fire resolutely.

“ I tell you she will not : she is so alarmed at your violence, and the discovery of your being in the dressing-room, that she turns pale at the bare mention of your name.”

“ She must get over that : let her be willing, and I shall be gentle. Has she any particular desire to become Mrs. Durnsford ?” he inquired, looking keenly on his companion.

“ Come, tell the truth, or I ask herself.”

“ She has not,” replied Durnsford, without noticing his insolent menace ; “ but her disinclination to a union with me is less decided than to a union with you.”

“ Thanks to her not knowing that Richard Durnsford was also in the dressing-room, planned and executed the carrying off the

legacy, and gave the death-stroke to her father ; to say nothing of putting her brother out of the way. My conscience is too delicate to permit her to wed this Richard Durnsford, in ignorance of half his merits."

" This is folly, Hudson ! you could never dream of telling her, for your own sake ; and it would be as wise not to name such matters here,—there may be eaves-droppers."

" Who is afraid ?—Not Wildfire."

" There may be prudence without fear. You must see the protection which my union with Mabel Conyers would be to both ; and you must also see, knowing what she does, that it would be hopeless to induce her to wed with you."

" I do not see that, if all were known ; and you are old enough to be her father."

" But all must not be known, for her sake and our sakes : it would kill her, timid and gentle as she is. You she will not marry—me she may, though not from affection, I

admit. The fact is, she loves another ; one with whom it is as much our interest, as our inclination, to prevent her union."

" Who ?"

" Edward Elton."

A burst of horrible imprecations followed the announcement.

" He shall not have her while I live !" shouted Hudson in his fury. " I hate him ! He defeated the attempt on her brother ; his blow is unavenged—I feel it still as a fresh wrong. He shall die !"

" He shall !" said Durnsford, setting his teeth.

" Does the girl own her love to her father's murderer ?"

" She will not believe his guilt."

" Ah, woman-like ! I would I were so loved ! But she shall not wed him. I abhor him !" clenching his fist and grinding his heel into the oaken floor as he spoke.

" You have cause!—besides your own wrong, your father fell by his."

“What ! my brave father ? the boldest highwayman that ever rode—except his son ? He shall not live !”

“To accomplish his death, you must retain your character of the squire’s son : it gives you power and influence.”

“And so leave you the wife ! You are deep, Master Richard Durnsford ; but I have not tracked or eluded men for years, to be fooled out of my pretty bride by soft words, bringing no good. I trust the evidence, which you have taken care that Dawkins and others shall give, will serve our revenge and safety : let the people see one hanged, and they will be satisfied ; the rarer the spectacle, the more it pleases. Lucky for us his passing that way ! I offer this and abide by it. Let me see the girl alone, as her brother ; honour bright, I tell no tales of you. If she really is so frightened at me that I cannot coax her to say she loves me, even as a brother, and promise to give up Elton, she shall then be told to draw

lots for a husband,—you, or some one else whom we shall provide. Should she draw you, well and good ! I shall be vexed, but that cannot be helped : I remain her brother, and give her away. Should she draw me, you must do the like, convincing her that I am not her brother. The fortune between us—the hunters to whichever loses the lady. No stamping, no palaver, so it shall be ! Show me the way to the girl's room.”

“ Stop ! the sight of you will kill her.”

“ Will it ? We shall see. Girls do not often die at the sight of a young lover, though they may have seen him once with a black crape on his face,” exclaimed Wildfire, starting up and rushing towards the door.

“ Stop ! stop !” cried Durnsford, rushing after, but vainly endeavouring to detain him ; whilst Mabel heard in the passage beyond, scuffling, rushing, shouting, mingled with terrific oaths.

For some moments she stood bewildered,

shocked at their confessions, alarmed at their threats: then her breathings came thick and fast, for she had scarcely drawn her breath before. Their absence alone was a relief, a blessing, for their words had fallen on her heart as the branding-iron on the bare flesh; and yet she had not shrieked at the torture. There had been some mingling, too, of good with ill, of light with darkness. Wildfire was not her brother—better that she should mourn her brother dead!—and he she loved was innocent!—cleared by the confession of the guilty, as decidedly as by the conviction of the loving. The uproar continued in the passage.

“Stop at least till I prepare her,” she heard in the persuading tones of Durnsford.

“Not I! she must be in some of these rooms, so up I go,” succeeded in the more resolute voice of Wildfire, as he liked to be called.

She heard him burst from the arm that would have detained him, and rush to the stairs; she heard the first step creak beneath

his tread. They were going to her room; they would not find her there—they would search the house; they would drag her forth—they, the murderers of her father; and she should stand before them, weak, defenceless, knowing his blood was on their hands—and they would doom her to death—or worse than death, a hateful marriage. There was but one hope of escape—there was not a moment to be lost: her very terror gave her power. She rushed to the door, which Susan had so adroitly left unlocked;—sprang wildly down the steps and along the dark winding path—burst open the garden gate with a strength she knew not she possessed, and stepped quickly out on the greensward beyond, closing the gate behind her.

The dark boughs of the stately trees waved high above her head, and, with the bridle hitched to a branch, stood the horse with the pillion ready for her flight:—but there was no Ralph Preston to be her guide.

She called upon him in low, wild tones, reaching the bridle from the branch. There was a slight rustling in a little thicket near; and in another moment a young man stood beside her.

“Let us up and away! there is no time to lose!” she exclaimed in the same wild tones, placing the loosened bridle in his hand and preparing to mount.

The young man made some reply, apparently, from his manner, to propose delay; but she neither heard nor heeded his words.

“Mount! mount! there is not a moment to spare. See! see!” she continued, still more wildly, pointing to the house; “they are in the gallery,—the next instant they will enter my room, and discover my flight.”

“Who is in the gallery? From whom would you fly?” inquired the young man.

“From my father’s murderers!—Haste! haste! Will you not save me?” clasping her hands, and looking into his face.

“ I will ! ” he replied, moved by her passionate pleading.

“ God protect and reward you, ” said Mabel less wildly.

Almost before the words were spoken, the young man had lifted her to the pillion, sprang up before her, and was guiding the horse cautiously but quickly down the hill on which the house was built, keeping in the shade as much as possible.

“ Whither shall I guide you ? ” asked her conductor as they gained level ground.

“ I care not ! but, haste ! haste ! — Hark ! that shout ! I know his voice ; they have sought, and not found me. ”

“ Which road ? ” asked her guide again.

“ I care not ! I know not ! I trust all to you : only speed ! ” and Mabel trembled as the shout was echoed far and wide.

And the young man did speed, taking what seemed a tolerable road ; yet, with all his pity for, and interest in, the lovely and terrified girl

he bore behind him, he could not resist a smile at having such an adventure forced upon him. The road became worse as they advanced, and the horse began to weary of his speed and double burden. The rider allowed him to slacken his pace, turning him from the rougher centre of the road to a line of green-sward at the side.

“ Oh, haste !” exclaimed Mabel wildly. “ They come ! Do you not hear ?” her ears quickened by her terror.

He did hear. The sound of their own horse's hoofs being deadened on the sward, he could now distinguish the clatter of coming horsemen, advancing at no sober pace, and sounding nearer and nearer every moment. Without further entreaty, he again urged forward the lagging animal. The road branched off to right and left ; there was no time for deliberation, and he dashed down the latter as preferable from being smoother, and more overshadowed by closing hedges,—thus less likely to betray them by sight or sound.

The trampling of their pursuers was lost for a time, then heard distinctly nearing; for there were no other sounds to distract the attention. He felt his charge clinging convulsively to the rail of the pillion; and sometimes he heard a deep-drawn breath, as he urged on the horse, not with mere reckless force, but with judgment, hastening or slackening his pace as the road varied, to give him rest yet not delay his course; but she hushed her fears, uttering no further entreaty, making no complaint. Her conductor's anxiety increased as he felt his horse failing. To continue much further at their late rapid pace was out of the question; the poor animal must be allowed a short time to recover breath.

He bent down to listen, hoping that his pursuers had taken the other track. No: he could distinguish the rushing sound of their horses on the road behind; or, had he doubted, he might have learned the truth from his companion's hollow whisper,—“They are coming!”

He had little time for thought, and happily was used to action. The lane down which he was speeding appeared to turn a little before them, and on he rode, hoping to see some house or outlet, marking the capabilities of escape as he passed on. The abrupt angle was reached—left behind—yet no house, no outlet was visible. The jaded horse stumbled—was saved from falling by its rider's strong upholding—scrambled on a few paces further—and then stood still, paying no heed to the young man's blows or encouragement. The moon, nearly at the full, shone out at the moment from behind a cloud, and the young man saw that the horse's fore feet were within a yard of a deep and precipitous quarry. Had the animal yielded to his urging, all had perished ! Mabel shuddered as her low thanks were breathed to Heaven ; and even her conductor's cheek was pale, though used to danger, as his thanksgiving echoed hers for the peril thus escaped.

But though saved from one peril, unseen and unsuspected, the one from which they fled had become more pressing from delay. The quarry was before—they who sought them were behind, gaining fearfully upon their steps; the banks high on each side of the road. What was to be done? The young man turned round and looked at his companion:—she was of a death-like paleness.

“ Could you make no terms with your pursuers ? ”

“ None ! ” replied Mabel in a hollow voice.

“ Do you fear death ? ”

“ Or worse ! ”

“ And I am but one—unarmed ! ” he said, marking her shudder.

“ He who saved me but now, can guard me still ! ” said Mabel with touching solemnity.

“ But I would not endanger you : leave me, with my best thanks.”

“ You wrong me ! ” replied her guide, his cheek flushing at her words. “ I will pro-

tect you whilst I have life: my only fear was on your account."

He turned the horse from the quarry as he spoke, and began to retrace his steps. Strange as seemed the action if he meant her well, she made no remonstrance; her late deliverance had shamed her terror into trust. No sooner had they passed the abrupt turning in the road, than the young man dismounting, dragged rather than led the horse up a narrow path on the side of the high bank, screened by hazel and thorn from the road below. Here would he await the coming of the murderers—it was his last hope for safety. The slightest sound might betray them—the panting of the wearied horse, the gleaming of the moon on a glittering button might reveal them: but it was on the shady side of the lane—he had marked all its advantages as he had passed. On came the horsemen, dashing recklessly over the rough ground with little regard to their own safety: they rode for life or death. The

horse of the foremost shied, brushing against the brake that concealed the fugitives, and Mabel could distinguish the flushed features of Wildfire—she could almost have touched him ; but, engaged in guiding and sustaining his breathed horse, and eager in pursuit, he saw her not.

Wildfire and Durnsford had scarcely passed the turning, before Mabel's guide led his horse, something restored from his short rest, down again into the road. In another instant he was on his back, retracing his steps at full speed, hoping by this manœuvre to put sufficient space between him and his pursuers to enable him to reach some house or village where his charge might be secure ; but his pursuers lingered not as long as he had expected, and before he had proceeded very far on the right-hand road, which he had formerly rejected, Mabel's quick ear again caught the sound of horses advancing in the same direction, though at some considerable distance. The young

man urged his again lagging horse up a rising ground, hoping to catch the sight of some place of safety ; but there was no habitation to be seen : a broad expanse of barren down was stretched out before them, without even a tree that could afford a friendly shelter.

“ It is all in vain ! I cannot save her ! ” thought the guide, as he gazed eagerly round. “ Unarmed, the odds against me are too great to afford a chance of protecting her. They are nearing rapidly—they will see us before that cloud can pass over the moon ; and once seen, there is no hope. They know the country too, are bold riders, well armed, and reckless. Poor thing ! I would that I could save her ! Her steadfast trust, her simple faith is beautiful ! yet she sees the danger as clearly as myself.”

However hopeless he now deemed their flight, he still galloped on, his keen eye searching the distance for some means of escape.

“ Ha ! ” he exclaimed with a brighter look,

the growing listlessness of despair changing into the energy of hope, as he turned his horse abruptly to the right, urging him on with a carelessness for his suffering that would have been cruel under other circumstances. His course was directed towards a stricken tree, whose bare arms and white stagged head stood out in bold relief on the dark sky behind. And what shelter can that stunted tree afford? what aid can its bare arms render? None! yet is it a token of hope, a landmark that shows him where he is, pointing out a path of escape. Without slackening his pace, or withdrawing his eye from his stumbling horse, (sustained by the skill of its rider as much as its own power,) he spoke abruptly to Mabel.

“Beneath that tree is a hollow track, leading to the top of the cliffs. If you do not fear descending them by a narrow and dizzy path, we may yet escape: I passed up that way this morning, and left a boat moored at the foot of the rocks.”

“ I fear nothing but the presence of those behind,” was Mabel’s reply.

“ Then we may still hope. If the moon would but step behind that cloud again till we reach the cliffs, our risk would be less : she has stood our friend once to-night.”

And she stood their friend again ; for the black cloud sailed over her fair face just as they gained the hollow way, hiding them from the observation of their pursuers, who came out at the same moment on the broad down.

“ On, on, my good horse, but a little way, and you shall have rest !” said the young man, encouraging the animal, that lagged heavily along the rugged track.

But the cheering words and the sustaining rein were of no avail : the poor horse, untrained to such speed, panting, sobbing with over-exertion, stumbled on some loose stones—staggered—sought to recover itself in vain—and fell. His rider was on his feet in an instant, having foreseen and in some measure

guarded against the accident. His first care was for Mabel, who answered his anxious inquiries, as he lifted her from the fallen horse, by a prompt assurance of being unhurt.

“Thank Heaven! the cliff is but a few yards further.”

“On! on, then!” said Mabel, outstripping him in her eager haste, but drawing back with a shudder as they reached the edge.

A light and broken cloud was now passing thwart the moon, through which she occasionally shone, glancing on the projecting points of the rocks, leaving the other parts in gloomy shadow. There was just light enough to show the terrors of a rough and precipitous descent of several hundred feet, at whose base the tide was rolling in with a sullen roar; but not enough to show a path distinctly, or to give a hope of a safe passage to a timid and inexperienced girl. Shrinking back, she clung to her guide's arm with an averted head.

“You are not used to such scenes, and

therefore imagine more danger than really exists," remarked her companion soothingly. "To me the descent is as nothing; and I too readily believed your declaration of feeling no fear. Will you not venture with my aid?" he continued in some perplexity. "There is a path a few paces to the left, and the boat still rides at anchor: could we gain that, you would be in safety. This is no time to hesitate: I fear your enemies have guessed your route."

For an instant Mabel listened with bent head, then answered wildly, "They are coming!—on! on! I fear not."

He hurried her to the point where the path began, and bidding her close her eyes, lifted her down with a brother's care, placing her in safety on a ledge of rock.

"If you would not mind staying here a few minutes alone, I might, by starting the horse in an opposite direction, puzzle our pursuers and gain more time."

“ But you will return ? ” said Mabel, looking searchingly into his face.

“ As I hope for heaven ! ”

“ Go, then ! but do not be long ! ”

With a hurried direction not to look down the descent, which she followed by covering her face with her hands, he quitted her, returning with all possible speed to the horse, that had risen, and was cropping the stunted grass by the side of the road. Dragging him up the bank on the contrary side to that in which he could hear the trampling of the advancing horsemen, he set him off at full speed, hoping that the gloom, only partially lit up as the moon shone forth for a moment and was again obscured, would prevent their discovering that he bore no burden.

“ Now for a little courage, and you will not find the descent so terrible as you imagine, ” was his address to Mabel, returning so quickly to her side, that she had scarcely time to think his absence long. She gave him her hand in

silence, and began the descent with unlooked-for boldness, the fear of encountering her father's murderers again overpowering every other dread. However easy the young man might have found the ascent in the morning, or however easy he might have found the descent at night, had he been alone, he by no means considered it such a trifling feat when charged with the guidance of a timid girl, little aided and sometimes misled by the changing and fitful light; yet by lifting Mabel (but a light burden) from projecting rocks where there were no good stepping-places, and guiding her down where there were, cheering her on the way by kind and encouraging words, the task was at length accomplished, and as expeditiously as should have been expected, if not as could have been desired. They stood on a flat ledge of rock overhanging the water, the spray dashing over them, and the waves coming in below with a hollow rush, that sounded strangely in the bewildered Mabel's

ears, who had never looked on the sea before. The beach on which the young man had landed some hours earlier was now completely covered by the crested waves, that broke against the rocks: the boat, which had then scarcely floated, was now rocking in a considerable depth of water. Mabel looked at the lofty cliffs above and around her, without a standing-place at their feet—out on the wavy sea before her with no boundary but the horizon—then up at her companion with a look that needed no words. To her there seemed no chance of escape; they were hemmed in, helpless victims to their pursuers.

“I did not know that the tide rose so high,” he muttered, with a troubled look, “and hoped to have turned the point. And so we may still, though not on land,” throwing off his hat and coat.

“What mean you?” asked the shrinking Mabel.

“To swim to the boat. Will you not ven-

ture on the water? The cave in which I intended to place you for a time, I see, is flooded."

She hesitated. The boat rocked, in her eyes, with a frightful motion,—the waves looked wild and awful; but a shout came down from above, and she paused no longer.

"Go! I fear not the sea! it is God's work, and bides his bidding,—I fear only man. But will you dare?"

"I run no risk," he replied, gratified at her anxiety for his safety in the midst of her own alarm.

He had said truly—he indeed ran no risk: the water was to him as his native element, and soon the boat, coming in with the tide, was beneath the rock, and the trembling Mabel placed within it, though not without some trouble and danger. Keeping as much under the rocks as possible to avoid observation from above, after arranging so that Mabel might recline at the bottom of the boat, he rowed

to a rock standing out some little way into the sea, forming one boundary of the narrow bay, forcing his tiny vessel so completely under its side (hollowed by the constant action of the tide), that it no longer appeared as a distinct and separate object. Twisting a rope round a sharp angle, he steadied the boat in this position; whilst, unseen himself, he watched the cliffs above in the direction in which he had driven the horse, and from whence had proceeded the shout.

A shot was heard, echoing, again and again, among the craggy cliffs: then a dark object was seen rushing as in terror towards the brink;—it reached it;—there was a scramble—the crashing as of some displaced stones—a fall—a cry of agony—more crashing of displaced stones—a grating sound, as if some large body were rolling down a rugged slope, struggling, but in vain, to stay its descent—a second fall, duller, deader—a deep groan—then a loud splash, a gurgling in the water—and all was still.

“What was that?” asked Mabel, starting up.

“Hush ! lie still !” replied her companion, forcing her gently down.

For some moments he continued to watch as before in silence, then turned to Mabel with a lighter tone and freer breathing.

“They are gone ! and now I trust that you are safe.”

“And that cry ?” asked Mabel.

“—Proceeded from the poor horse. If I guess correctly, the shot which was fired to disable, only alarmed him ; and, rushing wildly forward in his terror, he lost his footing, and was precipitated down the rocks into the sea below, though occasionally delayed in his downward course by the various projections. I fancy I saw two figures craning over the cliff as he fell, and judge from their gestures that they consider further pursuit as useless, not aware of you having dismounted. Still, as it is possible that they may descend the cliffs to make

quite sure, you had better not land exactly in this neighbourhood. I should propose, for the present, rowing out to sea."

"On ! on !" gasped Mabel, waving her arm over the boundless waves before her.

And on he rowed, keeping out of the moon-lit track upon the sea. The boat with its light freight glided swiftly on ; Mabel's burst of tears, and her broken thanksgivings, the overflowing of her grateful heart, were hushed, and she only spoke to urge him on—only thought of placing greater space between her and her foes, till his arms wearied of their labour, and his experienced eye saw that in the sky, and on the waters, which induced him to think a change of proceeding desirable.

"On ! on !" said Mabel as before, when he ceased to row.

"Not so !" he replied, still resting on his oars. "I have already obeyed your brief command longer than is prudent. We have sped across the waves like the phantom-ship,

which may not stay her course, on ! on ! till time shall end ; but we are not spell-bound, like her. There may be more peril soon on the sea than on the land ; and we shall do well to guard against it. You have thanked me for my services, more than they merit ; will you not tell me now whom I have served ?”

“ Did not Susan tell you ?” asked Mabel in surprise.

“ Who is Susan ?”

“ Who is Susan ?” repeated Mabel, raising herself on her elbow to look at her questioner.

“ Are not you Ralph Preston, Susan Wickham’s lover ?”

“ I am not Ralph Preston, nor have I the honour to be Susan Wickham’s lover,” replied the young man with a smile.

“ Not Ralph Preston !—good Heavens !—who are you then ?” she exclaimed, starting up so abruptly as to peril the safety of the boat.

“ Most people call me Robert Foreman :

but sit down, I entreat you," he said, gently compelling her to take a seat.

"Robert Foreman!" exclaimed Mabel anxiously; adding, as if reassured, "Perhaps Ralph could not come; and he, or Susan, persuaded you to take his place."

"I know nothing of Ralph or Susan. I landed this morning where we came down,—mistook my directions—lost my way—and wandered about till attracted by a light. Skirting a garden-wall to gain the entrance of the house whence shone that light, I saw a man hitch a horse to a tree, and then walk cautiously under the wall till he met what I guessed, in the faint light, to be a female. A whispering followed; but as they turned a corner, I could neither hear nor distinguish more. Unwilling to disconcert an elopement,—for such I guessed it to be, seeing that the horse had a pillion,—I was still hesitating how to act, when you came from the garden, calling on some one in evident alarm. Coming forward, I endeavoured to

explain ; but, instead of heeding my words, you called on me so earnestly to mount and save you, that, stranger though I was, I could not resist your pleading, judging the peril to be imminent from the wildness of your looks and tones."

"A stranger ! what will become of me ?" exclaimed Mabel, wringing her hands. "But surely you will not betray me to my foes ?" looking up in his face with mingled trust and terror.

"Never !" replied the young man warmly, resolving in his own mind, as he looked on her upturned face in its gentle beauty, lit up by the moon in whose path of light they were now floating, never to leave her till he had placed her in safety with her friends. "Do not doubt me ! but think of me as a brother—a kind and careful brother."

"No, not a brother !" interrupted Mabel quickly, with a look of terror.

"Not a brother, then, since you do not

wish it. I have no particular fancy for the title," he added, checking a smile.

"You have already proved yourself a friend."

"I would willingly prove myself still more so. Will you not tell me who you are, that I may know how best to serve you?"

"I would go to Wexton," she replied, evading his question.

"To Wexton?" he repeated with a start, looking more keenly at her.

"You promised not to betray me," said Mabel timidly, alarmed at his manner.

"I did! Will you not believe me?"

"I will believe you, though your start alarmed me."

"Did I start? No matter: I meant no harm to you. I am going to Wexton myself, and shall feel pleasure in being your escort. How do you go? and where would you land?"

"I know not! Susan was to settle all with

Ralph," replied the timid Mabel, who knew little of practical geography, and less of experimental travelling.

"Never mind!" he observed with a kind smile that reassured her. "As I took Ralph Preston's place at a venture, I must perform its duties, if you will trust the arrangements to me."

"I will trust all to you."

"All but your name," he remarked with a smile so arch, that she looked down in silence. "I will not press the point, since such is your wish," he continued more gravely. "Is it also your desire that I should not inquire into the cause of your flight?"

"Oh, no! Do not ask me now! All will be known soon."

"Calm your fears! I will neither distress you by questions, nor force your confidence further than to prevent your wishes."

"You are not offended?" said Mabel timidly; "you to whom I owe so much! If

you did but know all I have endured—how I have been deceived, and that the life of the innocent may rest on my words, you would not judge unkindly.”

“ I am not offended,” said the young man earnestly. “ Only speak your wishes, and I will fulfil them to the best of my abilities without a question.”

“ I would reach Wexton as quickly as I can ; for the life of the innocent may depend on my speed. Only place me with Mr. Astell, of Astell Court, and you shall know all.”

“ Mr. Astell !” repeated the young man musingly.

“ He will receive and protect me : I have no other friend to whom I can apply.”

“ It shall be done,” he replied. “ I see but one difficulty.”

“ What is that ?”

“ What no one likes to admit, and what I never felt so keenly before, — poverty !” a blush rising as he spoke. “ Could you

wait till I wrote to my friends, that might be remedied."

"I am rich," said Mabel quickly, placing a well-filled purse in his hand.

"Take back your gold till we want it. I am afraid I have undertaken no sinecure in promising to be your escort; you are far too simple and single-hearted to pass through the world in safety. You will not trust me with your name, yet offer all your gold (having had no proof of my honesty), without a thought of the temptation it might prove out on this open sea."

"I cannot fear you. Do but place me in safety with Mr. Astell, and you shall have gold in abundance."

"Do you think to pay my services with gold?" he inquired, a little piqued.

"Oh, no! all I have could not pay them as they deserve."

"What if I hereafter claim some other reward?"

"It shall be granted, if in my power."

“ Remember this !”

“ I will.”

“ Now I should advise your trying to sleep. I obeyed your wild command of ‘ On ! on !’ till, as wind and tide are at present, it would be scarcely possible to reach the spot from whence we embarked : nor do I think it desirable to attempt it ; your foes may yet linger near, and knowing nothing of the neighbourhood, I cannot secrete you from their search. I would spare you a night on the water, but it is not in my power, the only safe landing-place being at a small fishing village some miles down the coast, too distant to be reached till daybreak. It is on our way to Wexton ; and I hope to procure from a farmer there the means to proceed to Penford, from whence your journey to Astell Court will be a matter of ease. Let me make you up a bed with this old sail, and wrap your cloak comfortably round you : after your terror and fatigue, you require sleep to fit you for your journey.”

“ Sleep !” said Mabel, shivering in the cold night air, and looking with alarm on the strange-shaped clouds crossing the dusky sky, and the crested billows as they rose and sank around her, now first becoming sensible of the increasing wind, and the rude rocking of the boat.

“ Yes, sleep ! Do but try : you are worn out with fatigue and terror ; and sleep soon comes to the young and innocent. Neither sea nor sky is as wild as you think ; and He who has kept you hitherto, will keep you still. Do not doubt it !”

“ I do not doubt it. And you——”

“ Will watch and row while you take rest. The sea is to me as land to others. I love to mark the shifting clouds, and listen to the surging waves. I have stood on the deck when the storm has raged, and the boldest trembled ; and this is but a summer sky, and a summer sea. I fear I have sometimes braved the tempest in the pride of youth :

certainly I never felt the power of the Mighty One so deeply as to-night, when I saw how a simple faith could make the feeble strong. Man's proud heart trusts not with the simple, loving faith of woman. His eye is on you, and His shield is over you ; your faith is a sure defence. Now lie you down and sleep in peace ; for I will wake and watch."

She yielded to his wishes, for her strength was failing ; and he made her a bed with an old sail left in the boat, and folded her cloak around her with all the gentle and loving care of a young father towards his weary child : and when she slept, as he had hoped she would, he drew off his coat, placing it over her to shield her the better from the cold night-air. The wind was in their favour ; it rose no higher, as he had predicted ; and on glided the little boat beneath the changing sky, now in shadow, now in light, dancing over the curling waves with a swing-like motion that lulled his charge to a deeper sleep.

And there sat Mabel's protector rowing, or resting on his oars, now looking on the heavy clouds sailing above him, now on the dark sea flowing beneath ; but more often still gazing on the gentle being sleeping near him, though her face was shrouded from his view. And he longed for the dawn, that he might look on that sweet face again, and listen to those silver tones that thanked so warmly. And other thoughts came along with that fair vision—thoughts of his childhood and his childhood's home, the love and care of his early years : and these were strangely and touchingly mingled, he knew not why, with the gentle being whom he watched. A sigh rose as he thought of his early years—it died away—and then he smiled to think of his thus playing errant knight, as of old, succouring oppressed and peerless damsels.

CHAPTER IV.

“It is near mid-day, and yet Penford is not in sight,” said Robert Foreman, addressing the boy behind whom Mabel rode, and who had undertaken to guide them thither, and take back the horses to the village where Mabel and her protector had landed at an early hour.

“It can’t be much further,” replied the boy doggedly.

“Confess the truth! you have lost your way. I have seen that from your manner the last quarter of an hour, but thought proceeding on this road as prudent as any other course.”

“I am sure Penford ought to be somewhere

hereabouts," said the boy, with a whimper, and a cheek as red as the miller's daughter in the old ballad.

"Ah, boy, things are not always as they should be, to the shame of some and the sorrow of others; and it is much pleasanter to lay the blame on Penford for having moved, than on your memory. There, don't whimper! I see you have done your best; and the kindness of your good father and his dame will prevent my being angry with you: only don't speak so boldly next time of your knowledge as to roads, and stay quietly here whilst I ride to the top of that hill and look around.—I am very sorry I could not procure you an easier conveyance, or a surer guide; and you are weary," he said, turning to Mabel. "Once reach Penford, and I think I can promise you a chaise and female attendant for the rest of the way."

"I thank you for your kind regret; but do not heed my weariness—only think of my anxiety to proceed."

“ I know where we are now,” he said, returning from the survey. “ We have gone too far to the right ; but having done so, we had better keep on our way to Salfield than retrace our steps to Penford.—Yet you require rest, and must have it, as well as the horses. I will claim hospitality for you at a cottage near : the owner is a misanthrope and something of a churl ; but his son has a kind and noble heart. Follow me !”

“ Take the horses to that shed, and I will see about providing for their wants,” was his order to the boy, when, some time after, he lifted Mabel from her saddle, and marshalled her up a neat gravel walk, through a tastefully arranged garden, to the door of a small but pretty cottage.

“ Come in !” said a rather ungracious voice, in answer to the strokes of his stick, for bell or knocker there was none. Visitors were rare and unwelcome.

Without further parely, the young man en-

tered the room with the weary Mabel leaning on his arm, and bade—"good morning" to the owner of the cottage, who turned round at their entrance, showing a tall thin figure greatly bent, and a countenance deeply lined with sorrow and anxiety.

"I have to apologise for my intrusion, sir; but this lady is very weary, as are our horses. I hope I am not too bold in requesting rest and refreshment, that we may pursue our journey."

His host drew up his bent figure to its full height, looked sternly on Mabel and her conductor, whilst a momentary flush came on his sunken cheek, and then answered scornfully,

"Rest and refreshment for the youth who keeps his word as others keep it—who pays his debts as others pay. Oh, certainly! we will spread a splendid board with costly viands—silver vessels; and liveried menials shall attend. We owe you such, and our thanks beside, not only for honouring our humble roof with your presence once again, but for so

prizing our hospitality as to bring another to partake of it."

Mabel shrank back at the bitter taunt; but the young man answered boldly, though colouring at the insult,

"I will not resent your words, sir, for your noble son's sake, and because there may appear to the suspicious some reason for the sarcasm. I am in your debt; nor have I yet the means of acquitting myself of the obligation. Your son will believe me when I say that I have still the wish and intention so to do."

"Ay, my son is a wise young man—wiser than an old greybeard like myself; he believes all the tales that are told him. Would that he were here, or I knew where!" he added with emotion, forgetting the presence of his guests and answering his own thoughts.

"I would indeed that he were here, sir! He would believe me when I say that, wrecked and nearly lost, I have but just set foot in

England. Through this, and this alone, am I still your debtor."

"A romantic tale!" remarked his host with a sneer.

"A true one, sir; but I ask no hospitality for myself from one who doubts my word:—only grant this lady rest and refreshment, and I will instantly leave the house: she can pay for the aid requested."

"Would you make my house a hostel—me its landlord, that you speak of payment?" questioned his host in wrath. "I heed not the loss of the paltry sum lent to you by my son; I only speak of the promise made and broken."

"Unavoidably broken, sir," replied the young man warmly.

"Of course!" he observed sarcastically.

"Take this!—I owe you more—far more; and then let us go!" said Mabel, presenting her purse to Robert Foreman.

"I will willingly take as a loan enough to

free myself from so galling a debt, having no fear that you will mock my poverty, or doubt my wish to reimburse you.—Here, sir, is the sum, and with interest,” turning to his host ; but his host heeded him not—at that moment he thought only of Mabel.

“ Who are you, who are thus liberal ? ” he asked abruptly, bending his scrutiny upon her.

“ Mabel Conyers,” she replied, shrinking timidly back, forgetting her intended concealment at his impatient question.

“ Mabel Conyers !—my sister ! ” exclaimed the young man, springing to her side. “ No wonder that I thought of my early home and my childhood’s friends when I looked on you ! ”

“ My brother ? my long-expected brother ? —they said you were no more ! Do not deceive me.”

“ I will not deceive you ! My life was sought, but the plans of the wicked failed. I

am Philip Conyers, though known for years as Robert Foreman !”

“ Mabel Conyers !” repeated their host in a tone that made them start: “ the daughter of Philip Conyers of the Grange ? Speak, girl !” he continued fiercely.

“ Yes, sir,” replied Mabel, clinging to her newly-found brother for protection.

“ Ha ! his children — his children beneath my roof asking for aid and shelter ! Do you know of whom you ask it ? Of him whom your father wronged, refusing to pay that which he owed, daring an appeal to law when his honour had been relied on.—Honour ! it is an empty name that the base use to gild their evil deeds !”

“ You wrong my father ! — I will stand surety for his honour—never tarnished, never doubted ! Make your claim, Mr. Elton, and I will engage that, if just, it shall be satisfied,” said the young man proudly.

“ Are you Mr. Elton — his father ?” asked:

Mabel wildly, stepping forward in her eagerness.

“ I am Mr. Elton !—I am his father, Mabel Conyers !” he answered sternly. “ What would you say to me ? Would you boast how you twined your snares around him ?—how you held him in your bonds—then threw him off, as your father threw aside the friend of years when poverty came on him ?—You start ! turn pale ! Where is my boy ?” grasping her arm :—“ speak girl ! lest I lay my curse upon you !”

“ Oh, no ! no !—do not that !—but go with me to save him.”

“ Save him !—where is he ? Clasp not your hands, and look not thus !—where is my son ?”

“ In prison !—on the charge of murder !”

He let go her arm, starting back in horror.

“ Whose murder ?” he demanded wildly.

“ My fond father’s !”

“ Your father !—my father ! Mabel, is this true ?” questioned her startled brother.

“ Alas ! too true ! ”

“ Good Heavens !—then I come back too late !—he will not hear my repentance—he will not bless me ! Perhaps he died in wrath,” exclaimed the horror-stricken son, leaning against the mantel-piece for support.

“ No, no !—he left his blessing for you !—he bade me give it, and say how he had longed for your return.”

“ Philip Conyers dead !—laid in the silent grave ! Then ends my enmity ; I war but with the living,” said Mr. Elton, more moved than he cared to show.

“ And murdered ?—did you say murdered, Mabel ? ” asked her brother.

“ Yes ! ”

“ Where ? ”

“ On the high-road—at night.”

“ To perish thus !—my kind and honourable father to die a dog’s death ! He shall have justice done upon his slayers ! Who is accused ?—did you not say that harsh man’s

son? If guilty, there shall be justice done, though I owe to him my life. Look to it, sir!" exclaimed the excited youth, waving his arm threateningly towards Mr. Elton.

"But he is not guilty! Tell me, girl, that he is not guilty, and I will bless you!" gasped the agitated father, clasping his hands, and bending before her in the earnestness of his appeal. "Do not say that he avenged my wrongs: if so, the sin must rest upon my head—it was my doing!"

"He is not guilty!" said Mabel firmly, nay proudly.

"Thank Heaven! I bless you for the words!" exclaimed his father.

"Is this true, or the delusion of love?" demanded her brother sternly.

"It is true!" placing her hand in his. "Mark! this hand shakes not while I speak—Edward Elton is innocent!"

"You deserve his love!—Heaven bless you both!" said Mr. Elton, taking her hand, whilst

his tears fell unheeded. "Shame upon me that I could doubt my noble son! I should have known him better!"

"Who is the murderer, then?" asked Philip Conyers.

"Mr. Durnsford."

"Durnsford!" shouted both gentlemen at once.

"He who poisoned my youthful mind, teaching me to judge harshly of my father—sowing dissension between us in secret—playing the moderator in public—urging my proud spirit to rebellion till I fled!—he who, I doubt not, bribed the highwaymen who sought my life!" exclaimed Philip Conyers.

"He who professed to be my friend when others wronged me—who pointed out my injuries, and supplied the means for flight—who accused your father of dishonour. Can it be that he deceived me?—that he was the evil-doer, not the wife of my affection—not the friend of my youth?—and that my own pride

was fellow-worker with his deceit? If so, what years of misery do I not owe him!—But did you say that my boy was in prison, charged with the murder?”

“He is! False men swear against him, and your letter is brought to corroborate the charge. He is without friends, suspected and deserted: oh! haste to save him!”

“Think not his father will delay.”

“Nor the friend who owes him his life,” said Philip Conyers. “Forgive me, sir, if I spoke too harshly.”

“The error rests with me,” interposed Mr. Elton. “I blush for my taunts and suspicions;” extending his hand, which the young man shook with warmth.

“Was there no other concerned with Durnsford?—my father was a strong man.”

“There was another,—one who has lately passed for my brother; but his real name, I believe, is Hudson, or Wildfire, the noted highwayman.”

“Hudson!—the name of the woman who nursed me and my child at Durnsford’s bidding,” remarked Mr. Elton.

“Hudson! the man who sought my life,—I then thought, from personal enmity,—I have since learnt, hired by Durnsford,” exclaimed Philip Conyers. Where are these men, and how is their guilt to be proved?”

“Alas! I fear it may not be proved, as I only know it from their own words: it was from them I fled with you.”

“Then I thwarted my worst foe unknowingly! Now, with God’s will, we shall clear the innocent and convict the guilty. Doubt it not, sweet sister. We will forward to Wexton as speedily as possible, and you shall tell me more by the way.”

“We will go together,” said Mr. Elton, looking kindly upon Mabel. “It may be that much, if not all, the gloom of my fate may have been wrought by my own hands. I could not brook that any should look upon me in

my altered fortunes ; I feared lest the finger of scorn should point me out as him betrayed and wronged by wife and friend,—and wife and friend may be still innocent ! Yet that cannot be—I saw and heard : this was no mere tale from fiendish lips.—Let us away to save my boy, that my letter, a sudden burst of anger, might have undone.”

“ On ! on ! ” said Philip Conyers with a half smile at his sister, as he thought of her wild injunction, and his own brilliant dreams as he glided over the moonlit sea, watching his gentle charge,—dreams melted down by one single word to a more sober, yet scarce less lovely colouring.

CHAPTER V.

EDWARD ELTON raised his eyes from the holy volume before him, as a sunbeam glaring in at the small grated window illumined one of its most encouraging promises. A rush of hope came across his heart as a flood of light into the darkened room of the sick, telling of health, and life, and the returning freshness of the young spirit. He forgot that he was alone, deserted by the few—scorned, detested by the many; he forgot that he was a prisoner, charged with the murder of one whom he had loved much, the father of one whom he loved still more; he forgot that he had received no message from her lips,—that she too might regard him with hate or fear; he forgot that

the evidence was strong against him,—that the friend to whom he had written, requesting his aid in his defence, had paid no heed to the summons, and that he had no means to fee an unknown counsel; he forgot that his father had forbidden him to think of Mabel Conyers, the lovely star of his dawn of life,—that suspicion rested on that father's name, and that he dared not claim his aid or sympathy, lest he should thus furnish a clue to those who would implicate him in the murder. He thought of none of these things; he thought only of the promise before him. He was not deserted, not desolate; man might strive to crush him, but a mightier than man would uphold him.

He watched that sunbeam as it passed slowly across his chamber, till it no longer found admission at the narrow window. He watched it at first with a buoyant spirit, an exulting hope: earth and heaven were to him for a time clothed in the glory of anticipated triumph. Then languor succeeded to the ex-

citement ; the colours sobered—faded ; hope became less exulting, and as the sunbeam passed away, and a gloom followed in his unfurnished room, it required some self-control to prevent his sinking into the despondency which occasionally overwhelmed him. Present danger, active suffering, he could have borne bravely ; but his eager spirit was ill formed by nature to support with patience imprisonment and inaction. Yet nature had been in part subdued, his impatience rebuked and chastened : his despondency was not unchallenged ; he had learnt to see errors in himself, unmarked before, and to be more trusting, more submissive. What was he, that he should be exempt from suffering,—that he should rebel because evil came upon him ?

The infirmities of the body will check the aspirations of the soul ; anxiety—and in his situation he could not be without it—will work a change ; confinement will bring lassitude and ill health to those accustomed to activity ; and

Edward Elton's cheek was pale and thin, the life was gone from his eye, the smile from his lip, and at times the body would have rule, causing him to doubt the possibility of establishing his innocence; and thus he drooped when the sunbeam had passed from his sight and a twilight gloom succeeded. He sat with his head bowed on his hands, and his thoughts wandering from Mabel to his father.

"Mr. Astell, sir," said the under-gaoler, whom old Ned had prepossessed in his favour, touching his arm, for he had not looked up at his entrance.

The young man rose, and a flush came upon his pale cheek, but faded again on the instant as he looked doubtingly on his visitor, uncertain of the purpose of his coming, and willing to regulate his own manner by his. But there was nothing uncertain in his visitor's address; his interest could not be doubted, his friendly intentions suspected.

"This is the only place, Mr. Elton, in which

I should not see you with unmingled pleasure; but I trust in a few days to receive you at Astell Court, relieved from the anxiety and annoyance attending your present unpleasant position. I only returned last night, or you would have seen me long before."

"I know not how to thank you, sir, for this unlooked-for kindness — this confidence in a stranger, when many tongues and many circumstances are against him," replied the young man, turning away to conceal his emotion as he grasped his visitor's hand.

"You give me more praise than I deserve, Mr. Elton. Old Ned has been with me this morning pleading your cause most eloquently; staking his judgment of a horse on your innocence, and asserting that Miss Conyers entertains the same opinion. How could I do otherwise than coincide with the judgment of an old groom and a young lady?"

"Did Miss Conyers send a message, then?" inquired the lover eagerly.

“None by me. Did you require a message to convince you of her opinion—to inform you of her movements?”

“I had no right, sir, to expect a message till I was cleared even from suspicion of her father’s murder; and I have received none,” he replied, turning away with a dulled look from his visitor’s scrutiny. The name of Miss Conyers should not be linked with mine, even in a whisper, till I stand in her presence free from suspicion: of her thoughts or her movements I know nothing, have heard nothing, since my interview with old Ned; of which he perhaps informed you.”

“I cannot doubt you, Mr. Elton: I wish I could. There might then be only imprudence on the part of Miss Conyers; now I fear there may be danger.”

“Danger to Mabel Conyers, and I here a prisoner, powerless, cooped up within these narrow walls, unable to defend her!” exclaimed the young man vehemently, raising his arm as

though to rend the strong stone barrier that kept him in.

“Calm yourself! there may be no danger.”

“You bid me be calm. It is ever thus with the old; they are cold and selfish in their age, and then they talk of the heat and the folly of the young, and call themselves the wise ones of the earth. You may be calm: you have never loved as I love Mabel Conyers, and known her you loved in danger without the power of protecting her.”

“Young man, be still!” said Mr. Astell solemnly; “stir not up the passions of my youth, that time and prayer have hardly tamed. Have I never loved? Ask of the heart, whose wounds are still unhealed! read it in my furrowed brow and sunken cheek! Years—long years have passed since then, and yet I tremble at her name! I loved Mabel’s mother even as you love her—and, it may be, more passionately still. Who should forbid our love—who stay our union? She should be mine! I

would break down every barrier that opposed my wishes! Should I stand calmly by, and see her given to another? I did not stand calmly by, but perilled lives and reputations, and wrecked the happiness of others! Where is she? and what am I? She is in the silent grave, where there is no love — but neither is there care nor sorrow;—whilst I live on a blighted, withered trunk, and have thus stood for years. There is no second spring for me on earth: my hopes are of another world!”

The young man looked down, rebuked and shocked at the emotion he had excited in one generally so calm.

“I beg your pardon, sir.”

“Ask not pardon of me. I erred as yourself; I too thought the aged were grown cold and selfish. Rather learn to school your rashness,” laying his hand kindly on his shoulder.

“I will endeavour, sir,” replied Edward, touched by his manner. “But tell me of Mabel’s danger.”

“Perhaps little,—perhaps none. She left the Grange at night, and in secrecy, after a violent scene with her brother, who does not bear the best of characters, and is gone no one knows whither. Old Ned fancied that you might have been informed of her movements, whilst common report attributes her flight to the dread of being called on to give evidence which might convict you. If so, the step was ill advised, and slander does not spare her name.”

“Good Heavens! that she should be wronged, though but in thought, through me!” exclaimed the young man passionately.

“It is but a report; you may best judge of its truth,” remarked Mr. Astell more coldly.

“Mr. Astell,” said the prisoner, flushing at his change of manner, “if you loved Mabel’s mother as I love herself, you will believe that I would rather suffer a shameful death than let a doubt rest on her fair fame. It was to

save her from comment that I declined stating where I spent the hours previous to the murder of Mr. Conyers. From you I will have no concealment: you are too honourable to betray a confidence; and if you truly loved her mother, you will protect her child. I was nearly the whole day lurking about the Grange to speak once more to Mabel before I sought my father, never heeding how the concealing branches tore my hands. At length I spoke to her, and, irritated by fancied insults, used expressions towards Mr. Conyers which, if repeated, joined to the other evidence, might be considered sufficient proof of my guilt. Note or message have I received none. I believe our interview was unknown to any; and it is my conviction that her own unbiassed judgment would have led her to hold an even course, leaving the rest to Providence. Who shared her flight?"

"She went alone, and no trace has been discovered of her course, though her brother, and

her guardian, Mr. Durnsford, have been eager in their search for many days."

"Alone?—and no clue? Can he have taken her life, as he took her father's? But no; that could not advantage him, and he loved her—if love it could be called. She would not have fled alone,—she is too timid;—another urged and arranged her flight:—even now he may have forced her to be his;—and I am here, fettered, caged, and she in the murderer's hands, calling for succour which I cannot give!"

"Whose hands?"

"Durnsford's."

"Do you suspect him of the murder?"

"Yes, I do."

"But on what grounds? He has ever borne an honourable character."

"It would have been useless to tell others: you may believe;—listen! Hunted from the Grange by grooms and dogs—fearing my own rashness should I be caught, and the bringing

scandal on Miss Conyers, I hurried on through bye-ways, till, breathless and wearied, I threw myself down in a ruined shed and slept for many hours. I was surprised and alarmed, whilst pursuing my journey early the following morning, to see the squire's horse grazing by the-road side near Tanner's quarry. Not far off lay his master. He knew me on the instant, grasping my hand with all his former kindness. I would have gone for aid ; but he bade me stay beside him, signifying, for he spoke with difficulty, that human aid would be in vain. I supported him in my arms, wiping the dew from his brow. His voice was low, and his words broken ; but his senses wandered not. Rude words had been exchanged at our last meeting, and his first sentence was regret for the circumstance.

“ ‘ I am sorry for what passed between us ; I was worked on by another,—you will forgive. The thought has pressed upon me, and I prayed that I might live to speak to you, or to

my child. My poor Mabel! I give her to your love: cherish her for my sake and for hers!—tell her I bless her in my dying hour. I had hoped to see my boy, too; but God wills it not, and I do not murmur. I paid too little heed to my ways while in health and strength. Harken to the dying! Put not off repentance; seek your God while young. The horrors of the last few hours!—the good omitted, and the evil done, rose up in terrible array. The body tortured, and the thoughts confused! the Evil One calling for his victim, and mocking at his broken prayers. A night of terror words cannot describe! But it is past. I hope now—humbly hope, trusting in Him who died to save. I prayed that I might live to give my Mabel to your care, and God grants the mercy. My blessing upon her and you!—you will be kind to all I cared for. I die in peace with all, forgiving my murderers, as I hope to be forgiven.'

“ ‘ Murderers !’ I exclaimed, for till then I

had only thought of his having been thrown from his horse: 'who were they?' His last words had been uttered with difficulty, and interrupted by groans, whilst his pressure of my hand had become more feeble. He looked up as I repeated the question, and his lips moved. I bent down to catch the words,—I fancied I could distinguish Durnsford; but there came a rattling in the throat, and I dare not aver that he was named. 'Durnsford! did you say Durnsford?' I demanded. The eyes lit up again for an instant;—I thought the head bowed in assent, whilst his hand grasped mine more firmly; but he could not speak. A glaze came over his eyes;—he started as at a sharper pang, and fell back in my arms with a deep groan. I called on him to speak, if but one word;—it was in vain!—the glazed eyes turned not—the hand stiffened in my grasp, and the head fell forward. I called for succour, but none came! I felt for the beating of his heart, but it was still! I knew not till he was gone how

I had loved him. I would not believe him dead. With the wild idea that a surgeon might yet avail, I laid the body on the bank and ran towards Mr. Horton's. I heard a noise behind me, but I heeded it not, looked not back—never guessed I was pursued, till, on endeavouring to rise after a stunning fall, I saw Dawkins beside me, who, aided by another, seized and bound me before I was aware of his intention. My entreaties, my explanations were unheeded, and I was dragged to the Grange amidst the jeers and the execrations of the furious crowd. The assertion that I admitted my guilt was a lie—the lie of revenge for having thwarted Dawkins in dishonest dealing. So faint was the whisper, that I do not consider myself justified in publicly charging Mr. Durnsford with the crime, whatever may be my own opinion; but I tremble at the thought of his holding Miss Conyers in his power. To have fled without his knowledge I believe impossible, for he is one who sees or

divines everything. I entreat you, therefore—would I could do it myself!—to seek her, and rest not till you have found her.”

“Depend on this: I will not hesitate, though some may say I have no right to interfere, not having been her father’s friend. I have the right of love, of justice, of humanity; and every inquiry shall be made. It is dreadful to believe Durnsford the murderer—his friend for years! I never liked the man, yet could bring no charge against him; and, by his own showing, he served one I highly valued. If I had any clue——”

“Consult Martha Wilford,” said the prisoner abruptly: “she foretold something of this, and professed an interest in Miss Conyers and myself.”

“And why should Martha Wilford take an interest in you?” asked Mr. Astell, turning a keen look on the speaker.

“That is a mystery which she refused to explain; for rescuing her cat from the dogs

could scarcely account for her good will. She commanded rather than requested my presence, and insisted on reading my fate, as she termed it. How she gained her knowledge of my past life, (a knowledge acquired by myself but a short time previous,) I cannot tell: but should her knowledge of the future prove equally correct, I may yet be recompensed for my present anxiety. She spoke of some secret foe, whom I took to be Durnsford, and bade me apply to you in case of need."

"And why did you not? I bade you do the same."

"You were absent, sir ;—and, charged with such a crime, I felt delicate in applying to a stranger."

"That is, you were proud, and waited for me to renew the offer, whilst I knew not how much you required my aid. Martha Wilford's conduct has been singular. The day before you came to Astell Court, she crossed me in my walk,—spoke of dangers threatening Miss

Conyers and yourself, and called on me to protect you if the need should arise. She knew her influence over me, from the part she played in my early history; she knew, too, my feelings towards the child of her whom I had loved: but she refused to assign any other reason for her interest in you, than your being an object of regard to Mabel Conyers. Your likeness to a lost friend struck me at our first meeting; but I know no one of the name of Elton. There is a report of a letter from your father, in which he accuses Mr. Conyers of dishonourable conduct, and urges you to avenge the injury."

"The letter does accuse Mr. Conyers; but those who would implicate Mr. Elton in the murder do him wrong. I know not to what my father alludes, and doubt not that he wrote under some misapprehension, since Mr. Conyers, as well as yourself, knew no one of my name. It is strange that all I meet should be struck with some resemblance which no one

explains: even Mr. Durnsford's first look I fancied one of hate, surprise — almost fear, but it so instantly changed that I have sometimes doubted my own sight."

"Has your father always borne the same name?" asked Mr. Astell thoughtfully.

"Since my recollection. If you ask this in reference to the report I know to be abroad, of my father's having committed forgery, I have only to say that I cannot and will not believe it."

"Of course his appearance will disprove the report."

"He will not appear unless I should be acquitted."

"Why so?" asked Mr. Astell gravely.

"Because suffering and wrong have made him shun his fellow men; and I will not, by forcing him from his retirement, subject him to the contumely of those who condemn us both unheard. He will not hear from me till I have been condemned or acquitted."

Mr. Astell looked steadily at the young man's flushed cheek and indignant bearing. The scrutiny was satisfactory.

“Is this kind to your father?” he asked in a more friendly tone. “His advice might assist you—his presence silence the clamour against himself,—his sympathy would support you.”

“It may not be wise, sir, as far as my own safety alone is considered; but I mean it kindly. My father is not as other men. I will not for the sake of his sympathy,—and none can tell what that sympathy would be to me, who have not been as desolate,—compel him forth among the cruel and the cold, recalling the agonies of long past years. If condemned,” and his voice faltered, “I had intended to leave a letter in the hands of a friend;—but I have no friend,—none will hold communion with a reputed murderer.”

“Say not so! You must look on me as a friend, and let me advise as a friend. Is

it true, as I hear, that you have engaged no legal aid?"

"It is true."

"And why is this?"

"Because, save my father, I stand alone on the earth. He who sees the hearts of men and the deeds of their hands can bring my innocence to light, if it so please Him: if not, I must submit to His will. Yet it is hard to die a death of shame, for the murder of one whom I would have risked life to save, for his own and his sweet child's sake!—to leave my memory so branded with the guilt, that even she may not weep my death!—My poor father, too!—what will he say?—And all this when life was opening out so bright before me!"—hiding his face with his hands to conceal his emotion, whilst the listener's lip quivered, and his eye dimmed as he gazed upon him.

"Yes, God will shield the innocent; but He works through means, and such should men

employ, asking His blessing on them. You must have counsel."

"It cannot be, sir."

"And why not?"

"I have no means to fee one; and justice must be bought," replied the prisoner bitterly.

"No wonder, since even friendship will not act without fine, shining gold!"

"And fine, shining gold shall not be wanting," said Mr. Astell warmly. "Have you applied to any one?"

"I wrote to Mr. Carswell on my first committal, thinking that, if unable to act himself, he would at least advise, since he professed gratitude for a slight service, and pressed me to visit town, offering to advance my wishes if I chose to study the law. It was to his house I was proceeding when my acquaintance with Mr. Conyers delayed my journey. I have received no answer to my letter;—yet he called himself my friend!"

"You shall have gold and a friend—a zeal-

ous friend!" replied Mr. Astell with friendly warmth. "You must not refuse me:—I should do it for mere justice, were I not interested by your own conduct, and your likeness to my lost friend."

"I cannot thank you, sir," said the prisoner; but the faltering voice and glistening eye told his thanks more eloquently than words.

"This likeness is very strange: it has some mystical power to win friends and foes," he continued after a pause.

"It is strange; and all who acknowledge it knew him, whose death I have never ceased to deplore," observed Mr. Astell.

Both seemed lost in thought; and in the heedlessness of abstraction which so frequently leads to unconscious, and merely mechanical action, Mr. Astell took up a sketch lying on the table, uncovering by the movement a curiously wrought pencil-case that lay beneath. His eye fixed upon it; he seized and examined it in every part, his countenance showing sudden

changes, whilst the hands shook that held it.

“Whose is this?” he demanded abruptly.

“Mine, sir,” replied Edward, surprised at his emotion.

“Yours? How, and from whom did you obtain it?”

“It was given me by my father when a boy, in compliance with my importunities.”

“But from whom did he obtain it?”

“Really, Mr. Astell, these are strange questions, asked in a strange manner; and more, I cannot answer them precisely. I found the pencil-case among some rubbish whilst ransacking a drawer which I was not justified in examining. Delighted with my discovery, I took it to my father, who said it had been given to him by my godfather; but, since he who gave it had betrayed and wronged him, the bauble had become hateful in his sight. He would have crushed it; but I pleaded so strongly for its possession, that at length he yielded,

on condition it should never meet his eye again. He thought it had been destroyed long before, and only spared it then to avoid prolonging an agitating discussion. But you are ill, Mr. Astell. Shall I call assistance?"

"Good Heavens! then he lives!" exclaimed Mr. Astell, without heeding his remark. "I was not deceived in the resemblance. Your father is ——"

"Who?" questioned the young man, holding his breath lest he should lose the name.

"The friend of my youth, Allan Beauchamp."

"Of Beauchamp Park?"

"The same."

"And that portrait in the haunted room?"

"Your mother; and you are my godson, Allan Astell Beauchamp;" and he wept on the young man's shoulder. "I never thought to have wept again," he said after a time, raising his head, and looking kindly on the prisoner,

who had sought to soothe his emotion. "But then, I never hoped to hear such words, to look on my friend's child, to hear that my friend himself still lived. Tell me all. Why did he fly from those who loved him? from his friend,—his wife?"

"He believed both false."

"Ha! How should he do that? He is still fondly remembered by us both."

"Does my mother live, then?"

"Yes; but in seclusion; and lately, in ill health. Against every persuasion she would visit Beauchamp Park, where the appearance of a stranger bearing a striking resemblance to my friend brought on a dangerous illness."

"Then I held my mother in my arms, and knew it not! Yet the beauty of that portrait has been with me ever since. But my father only told me of false friends, the giver of this gift one of the falsest!"

"I did him no wrong, save through my

rashness: but there was a mystery connected with his sudden flight which I could never fathom. Tell me what you know."

Edward did tell him all he knew, all that his father had revealed; and Mr. Astell listened in fixed attention: but still the mystery was only in part explained.

"There must have been treachery somewhere; but, as your father gave no names, there is still much that I cannot comprehend. Mabel Duncombe was Mrs. Beauchamp's cousin. I had long loved her, and my regard was returned; but we loved in secret, for I had then no fortune, and her brothers, worldly men, with fierce, ungovernable tempers, insisted on her marrying Mr. Conyers. Too timid to refuse, yet loving me too well to consent, the point remained undecided. Your father left his home on urgent business, as you know. Indignant at oppression, touched by suffering, generous to a fault, Allan Beauchamp would have shared his only remaining guinea with a

friend. It has never been clearly understood how he became so much involved : his uncalculating generosity, the villany of agents, and the dishonourable conduct of some calling themselves his friends, could scarcely explain it ; and it was supposed that revenge had some share in his ruin. Mr. Garnier, the present possessor of Beauchamp Park, had been rejected by your mother ; and Mr. Durnsford was also suspected of having aspired to her hand. The former bought up as much as in his power the claims of others against him, pushing the law himself to its extremest rigour : the latter, after Beauchamp's supposed death, produced a paper empowering him to act in his name, and receive all monies due to him in consideration of an advance. Why Durnsford, whom Beauchamp had disliked, was so appointed in preference to myself or some other friend, and why his wife was never named, was one of the several strange circumstances for which no one could account, and which induced a belief that

the disorder of his affairs had deranged his intellects. I have always bitterly regretted that I did not remonstrate on his profuse expenditure; but I was not over prudent then, and feared he might think I wished to confine his generosity to myself. I was absent when he departed for the North, but returned suddenly to the neighbourhood on hearing that Mabel was to be shortly married to Mr. Conyers. She and her brothers were staying at Beauchamp Park, and, to quiet her alarm—for, knowing her brothers' temper, she always dreaded a hostile meeting,—I consented to appear in disguise, instead of openly, as I had intended. Mrs. Beauchamp had been dangerously ill; but, unwilling to alarm her husband, or cause his return, knowing the importance of his business, she had concealed her indisposition, and still written when scarcely able to hold a pen. This may account for the fancied constraint and coldness of her letters. The only secret I had ever withheld from Beauchamp

was my love for Mabel; withheld at her earnest entreaty, to calm her fears lest it should become known. Thus, liking the frank and generous temper of Mr. Conyers, he wished for the union, little thinking the misery it would bring on me. Even your mother guessed not our love; and when I told her, and implored her counsel, she too wished that I should not then apply to your father for his aid, fearing to increase his anxieties and endanger his safety: yet she felt for and did all she could to serve us. She urged Mabel to refuse compliance with the commands of her brothers, or to throw herself on Mr. Conyers's kindness;—she offered to speak to that gentleman herself, to bear her refusal to her brothers, and submit to their violence, if Mabel would engage to remain firm: but Miss Duncombe was too timid for either—she could only weep and wring her hands; and fancying her brothers suspicious of the truth, she feared to meet or admit me as before. Your father wrote to fix a day for his return;

the Duncombes talked of going, refusing to leave their sister,—and it was understood that they intended to hasten the marriage. There was no time to pause, and, maddened at the thought of losing Mabel, I wrote a wild note to Mrs. Beauchamp, most earnestly entreating an interview—a request there was little difficulty in granting. A case of suspected fever, and your delicate looks, had induced Mrs. Beauchamp to place you and your nurse, Martha Wilford, at a pretty cottage in a distant part of the grounds; and it was her daily custom to go to that cottage, or be met on the way by the nurse, in whom she placed implicit trust. Martha Wilford had received a superior education; her beauty was at that time striking, and her whole deportment commanding. She was not a popular person; but there was every reason to believe her attached to you and your mother; and she had acquired the confidence of Mabel, having been generally present at our stolen meetings. Mrs. Beauchamp met me in

the shrubbery, Martha Wilford keeping watch at her own suggestion, lest the Duncombes should burst upon us; they having some suspicion, she asserted, of my being in the neighbourhood.

“ With a wildness little short of delirium, I urged your mother to procure me one more interview with Mabel, and second my entreaties for an elopement, Mabel’s fears preventing a more open course. She had no parent to whom obedience was due, and her brothers sought the match for their own private views, though aware of her repugnance. It must have been these passionate pleadings, and my as passionate expressions of gratitude, that misled your father; but he should have better known his angel wife, whose love still lives upon his memory. Our parting was hurried by Martha Wilford’s warning that some one was approaching. I hope she dealt honestly with us. That night the bailiffs took possession of the house, in virtue of a writ obtained by Mr.

Garnier on not very legal grounds :—he sought not justice, but revenge.

“ Your mother sent to inform me of the circumstance, saying that my meeting with Mabel Duncombe must be postponed ; but, in my rashness, I heeded not the message, and proceeded as had been before agreed on, still resolved to persuade her to become the partner of my flight, for which everything was prepared. Finding the side-door locked, I climbed in at a window, and reached Mrs. Beauchamp’s dressing-room, the place appointed for the meeting ; but, unhappily, I moved not so silently as to escape observation. Scarcely had Mrs. Beauchamp, who was arranging some papers, recovered from her surprise at my unexpected presence, and implored me to depart, before the Duncombes rushed into the room with their swords drawn, professing to take me for a robber. Mrs. Beauchamp stepped between, or I should have fallen a victim to their fury. Mabel’s name was not at first

mentioned; and when others came, attracted by the clamour, they taxed your mother with clandestinely admitting visitors in the absence of her husband, thus giving rise to evil reports, which, however, soon died away, your mother's conduct having ever been such that no slander against her could be credited. It was believed by most that my visit referred to the bailiffs. The Duncombes departed at daybreak, leaving Mrs. Beauchamp in her distress, and taking their sister with them, assigning my midnight visit as the reason: and it was a reason, but not as they coloured it;—they knew too well I loved their sister:—there had been treachery somewhere, and my rashness had done evil. Alarmed at their fierce threats, dreading lest I should perish by her brothers' hands, or they by mine, Mabel promised to become Mrs. Conyers, provided they would apologise to me, and pledge themselves that no hostile meeting should take place. They consented; and before she left

the house, she wrote to bid me farewell, imploring me not to seek her, as her word was passed, and an interview would but increase her grief. I was little short of mad when aware of the consequences of my rashness! Mabel was lost to me for ever! My desperation might have urged me to some fatal act, had not the state of your father's affairs and your mother's anxiety withdrawn my thoughts from myself. The bailiff, grateful for some former kindness, and contrary, I believe, to the wishes of his employer, offered every civility in his power; but still his duty must be done. With little more than a lieutenant's pay, I could neither offer bail nor bond, but proposed meeting Beauchamp, and persuading him to secrete himself for a while till matters could be arranged. I was on the point of departing, when a note was given to Mrs. Beauchamp, the bearer of which had returned immediately on its delivery. It purported to come from a friend of Beauchamp's, and begged your mo-

ther and myself to proceed with all possible haste to an obscure village in the North, where my friend lay dangerously ill, unable to write himself. It also urged the strictest secrecy, as other writs were out against him.

“ Within an hour, we were on our road; the anxious wife, to avoid delay, having forborne to see her child, contenting herself with a note to Martha Wilford, in whom she placed implicit trust. On reaching the village mentioned in the note, and inquiring for Beauchamp under a feigned name as desired, a letter was delivered, stating that he had been obliged to leave the place, though still ill, but would return in a few days, advising us to wait his coming, and not excite suspicion by inquiries. We waited for many days, and then, hearing nothing, retraced our steps, Mrs. Beauchamp feeling anxious for her child, not having heard from the nurse, to whom she had written. Little did she imagine the tale that would greet her on her return! Beauchamp

Park was in possession of Mr. Garnier!—Martha Wilford's life was despaired of!—her illness caused by the loss of the child committed to her charge.

“She said that your father had met her and torn you from her arms, in spite of her entreaties, the evening after our hasty departure. His violence, and the wildness of his looks and words, had so alarmed her, that she had fainted; and the shock on recovering, of finding no trace of parent or of child, had brought on fever and delirium.

“Further inquiry proved equally vain: none had seen Beauchamp in the grounds—none had seen him afterwards. His hat and some clothes belonging to the boy were found in the river, and after some days a body supposed to be that of the lost child. Thus all believed that father and son had perished in the stream, though from the numerous holes it contained, and a recent flood, the body of the former was not recovered. Some spoke

of the death as accidental ; but many believed it premeditated. All endeavours to discover the writer of the letters were in vain ; and we were doubtful whether to consider them the warnings of a friend, or the frauds of an enemy. The only other information we could obtain of the movements of Beauchamp after writing to announce his intended return, was afforded by Mr. Durnsford and his servants. That gentleman was indebted to him both for sums borrowed, and the purchase of some fields ; and these sums Beauchamp had written to request he would have in readiness on the day previous to that fixed for his return, in his letter to his wife, when he would call to receive them, offering at the same time to sell him more land, at an under price, if he would pay down the purchase-money on the instant. He arrived at the time appointed, received the money already due, that for the new purchase, and a considerable sum beside, giving Durnsford receipts, and making over to him,

in return, all the money he could hereafter snatch from greedy creditors. This done, he departed, setting off full speed towards Beauchamp Park. Such was the tale of Durnsford and his servants. The receipts and the power bore out the statement of the former; and all agreed that there had been considerable excitement in Beauchamp's manner, though not amounting to insanity.

“There were many mysterious circumstances never made clear. To what purpose the sums thus procured had been applied, or if applied at all, remained a secret. Unhappily, having put off making a will, no one could legally interfere in the arrangement of his concerns with Durnsford, who could not be called on to give an account, since all secured belonged to himself; so that whether little or much was saved from the wreck of the property, none knew. Mr. Durnsford averred the former, and showed papers in proof; but there were

some who doubted. The entail having run out, Beauchamp Park was taken possession of by Mr. Garnier, who always loudly asserted his having been a loser; though few believed him.

“ Mrs. Beauchamp’s settlement could not be touched, and on this she has lived in seclusion ever since, removing from the neighbourhood of Beauchamp when sufficiently recovered from the dangerous illness which followed her knowledge of the death of her husband and child. She had loved Beauchamp with a woman’s love—the first love of a warm and noble heart; and though she bowed to the stroke, and murmured not after the first burst of sorrow, she was never again the brilliant being of her early years. The spring-time of her life was gone! the brightness of her spirit had departed! Her time and thoughts were spent in soothing suffering; but her step was not buoyant as of old, her smile was not joyous: her

heart was in the grave with her husband and her boy. How will she bear the joyous news that both are living?

“I was assured that the paper on which Durnsford acted was perfectly valid; but there was one rather singular circumstance connected with it. The witnesses were none of Durnsford’s regular servants, but Thomas and Mary Hudson, neither of whom bore a very good character. The former was soon afterwards found lying dead on a common near, a ball having passed through his lungs. That he fell by your father’s hand I have now no doubt. The wife was insane for many years after her husband’s death, and could not be questioned. Durnsford gave as a reason for their having witnessed the deed Beauchamp’s particular request, considering that the woman’s being under obligations to him would ensure the secrecy he desired. The fact of their having been in the house about the time was a strong confirmation of the tale; but, from your father’s

account, I have little doubt that the paper was not really signed till some days after. There being neither will nor immediate heir, no one was interested in sifting the matter; and my regiment being ordered abroad almost immediately, I could not make the desired inquiries.

“The death of the possessor of Astell Court and the two next heirs, by a malignant fever, transformed the poor lieutenant into the wealthy landed proprietor: but wealth came too late to procure him that for which he still pined. Mabel Duncombe had become the wife of Mr. Conyers; and I walked through the stately halls where my ancestors had walked of yore, with a heavy step and a joyless heart. Its proximity to the Grange made Astell Court of still less value in my eyes. What was gold to me when she could not share it?—what, a splendid house and fine domain, when she whom I had loved was the bride of another, and I could almost see her home from my windows? Better have continued poor!—

the struggle to maintain the body would have subdued the torture of the mind. Thus thought I in my rashness and self-will. The spirit of discontent dwelt with my gold—there was no peace in my heart, and life wasted on in feverish idleness.

“I went to see your mother, and was rebuked. She had suffered more, yet she was a blessing to all around her : she spoke of a Christian’s duties—of his high hopes, not of earth ; she pointed out my many blessings, the sufferings of others, the wants of the poor and needy. Her voice faltered as she spoke ; but I saw that her acts were according to her words, and I grew thankful for the wealth which enabled me to do the like.

“I learnt that Mrs Conyers rarely went out, that her health was failing, and that she shrank from the chance of our meeting. Yet we did meet—once, only once ! We entered a narrow lane at opposite ends ; and before I could decide either to advance or retreat, her

carriage was overturned, through the awkwardness of her postilion. I was at her side in a moment, and, lifting her from the carriage, placed her on the bank as she motioned. She never spoke—she never raised her eyes, till I handed her into the righted carriage; and then she murmured thanks, so brief, so low, no ear but mine could have distinguished them. I felt that I was not forgotten—she had not dared to look upon me. My outward bearing was composed; but wild thoughts were in my heart the rest of that day and the long, long night, and I hated Philip Conyers with a deadly hate! The evil thoughts that were unchidden might have been fashioned into acts; but Martha Wilford came in secret, begging me, by the love which I had once borne her mistress, to leave the neighbourhood. She would not say she had been sent, or her coming sanctioned, though I guessed it. She spoke of Mabel's sinking spirits — of her failing health, and she prayed me to go if I would not hasten

her death. 'She will not linger long,' she added. I went; but my compliance with her wishes was ill repaid by her connexions.

"A right of road across my grounds was claimed and tried, purely, as I believe, to annoy me; and her husband and brothers stood openly and eagerly forward in the contest. Convinced that justice was on my side, I was in no mood to yield, feeling it to be a personal attack, veiled under a flimsy show of zeal for the popular good; yet I did yield at Mabel's earnest entreaty, who feared a collision between me and those connected with her. Martha Wilford came to implore me to forbear. 'She was dying,' she said: 'it would be her last request. Could I refuse that?' I could not refuse it; my pride submitted to my love, and I gave up the road to the public, with some few saving protests, but not one word reflecting on her husband or brothers. I did not again appear in the neighbourhood till I heard of her death, soon after the birth of her second child.

In the grave there are no marriage vows,—the bonds of earth are broken: she was mine again! By the aid of Martha Wilford I knelt beside the dead!—I pressed my lips to hers!—I held her hand in mine! There was no longer guilt in my love. I took her child in my arms and blessed it;—I fancied even at that time a likeness to its mother, a resemblance since strikingly developed, and, forgetting my enmity to her father, remembering only my love for that mother, I resolved to watch over and protect her,—to give her a daughter's portion of my wealth,—to look upon her as my child. None but Martha knew of my visit.

“It was years before I returned to my native land. I had wandered over lonely wastes,—I had mingled in the shock and strife of men; but the spell of her love was on me still, and I looked with indifference on the charms of others. I knew that the little Mabel could be nowhere better than with Miss Conyers, and I made no attempt to see her, fearing to increase

her father's unfriendly feeling. The time might come when my wealth would enable me to serve her effectually :—she should not, like her gentle mother, be compelled to a union from which she shrank.

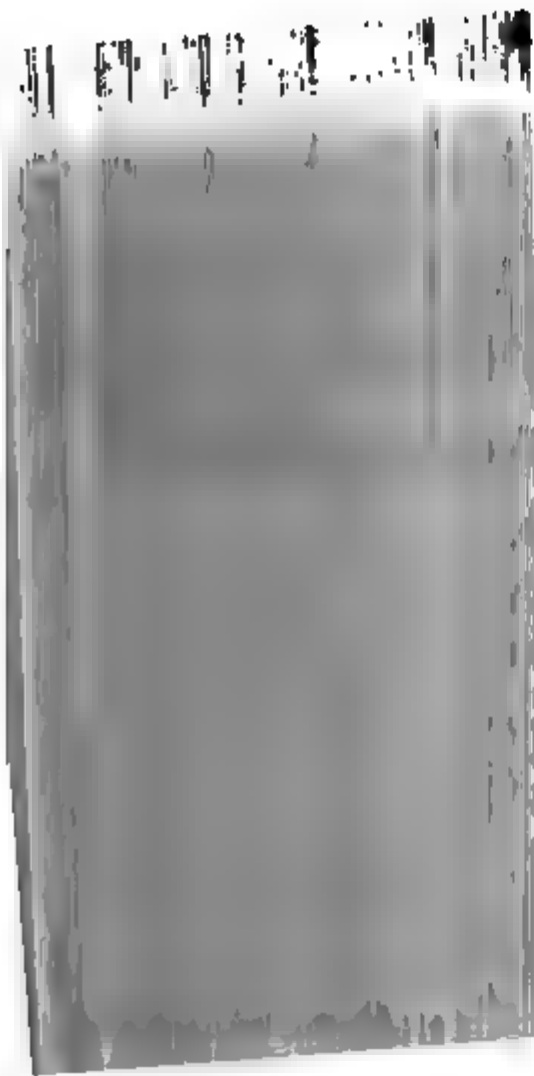
“ I must do Mr. Conyers the justice to say, I do not believe, from what I afterwards learnt, that he was aware of Mabel's attachment to me, though acquainted with my love for her: the brothers were too politic, and she too timid, to enter on the subject. Generous and hospitable, he had no penetration, — none of that delicacy of affection which would enable him to feel what the multitude never see. He procured all she wished for, was sorry she looked so sad, but attributed it to her delicate health. Nor do I believe that he would have interfered in the law-suit but for others, who succeeded in persuading him that he was performing a public duty. May he rest in peace !—the passions of my youth are tamed : his child shall be as my child, and I will pour no reproach upon her father..

“ I saw Mabel and yourself ! At the same instant suddenly stood before me the living images of the dead,—of those whom I had loved the most. Thoughts of the past came over me : the affection bestowed upon the dead seemed claimed by the living. I knew of your mutual love from Martha Wilford, who hinted that it might be crossed : but she told me nothing of your birth, and it appeared that you could not be my godson. It mattered not ; you had won upon me by the likeness and your conduct to Mabel, and I resolved to stand your friend. Confide in my regard as in that of a parent : Beauchamp and his wife must not grudge me a portion of your love, and Mabel shall yet be yours ; I will seek her far and near, and send messengers to your parents. What a joyful meeting ! Martha Wilford shall be sought, too, though her natural haughtiness has grown with time and seclusion, till the only feeling strong enough to master it is her affection for young Conyers. She accuses

his father of harshness—anything rather than blame her boy, as she always terms him. I suspect her of knowing more of his movements than she would wish believed, having applied to Mrs. Beauchamp and myself for money more than once, asserting proudly that it was for another, though refusing to explain her words. Old Ned says she has been absent for weeks. This is strange, when her favourite has returned, and she might expect the reward of all her care — unless indeed the report of her death is correct. But it is only waste of time to seek reasons for her acts; they were ever inexplicable. I fear there are some black pages in the history of her life; yet, if really attached, she is capable of any sacrifice to serve the object of her affection.—Enough of her: now for your legal advisers.”

Before Edward Elton — for so it will be better still to call him—could thank his friend, the door of his cell again opened, and admitted a young man of prepossessing appearance.

“What a cold, unfeeling wretch you must have thought me!” exclaimed the stranger, grasping Edward’s hand. “Ay, I see you did, and were on the point of giving in your adhesion to the gloomy deductions of your philosophical papa, who proclaims all men selfish and deceitful. My light spirits defend me from such an estimation of those I like, whatever may be my thoughts of man in the gross. Now, the fact is, (and facts are better than theories,) a pair of bright eyes detained me in Ireland longer than prudence or her impersonation, my respected father, considered desirable; but as no one knew in what part of the dear island I was lingering in admiration of its beauties, I could neither receive letter nor lecture. I was shocked at the consequence of my idleness, and positively, on the honesty of a lawyer, was on my road hither within half an hour after reading your epistle, burdened with such a weight of advice, good wishes, and legal arguments, from my good father, as would



you
minie
the
tice,
mean
immo
you tl
match
how d
highly
you, w
your ps
he add
denly
smile, v
“ M

“A real friend,” replied Mr. Astell.

“You have already introduced yourself as my future counsel, and Lord Chief Justice, or I would have performed the office for you,” said Edward with a smile.

“No impertinence, Elton, or I will leave you to be hanged without the benefit of my genius. This gentleman will excuse a few wild words from one who never could be grave for ten minutes together out of a court of justice.”

“And there you practise for the Chief Justiceship, I have no doubt,” replied Mr. Astell, smiling. “Allow me to congratulate you on your rank in anticipation; and then, if you please, we will consult on your friend’s unfortunate situation.”

“By no means, sir. Spare me from business for a little time; we can discuss that hereafter,” replied young Carswell gaily, but turning an inquisitive look on his friend, who answered its meaning.

“You need not fear disclosing any brilliant idea before Mr. Astell; he has long been my

my

for

defe

one

~~Inter~~

Chief

“ I

derer,

“ U

that y

to dep

unpar

gaily.

round

“ W

that shall beat 'Sir Palmerin,' 'The Seven Champions,' and 'The Arabian Nights' out of the field, and render me as immortal as the author of 'Goody Two-shoes.' This is the plot:—You shall be desperately in love with Miss Conyers, — Miss Conyers the like with you. You need not blush and protest,—it is only part of the plot,—I did not say it was really so. There shall be very strong evidence against you; but you shall be cleared at the last moment, wholly and solely, of course, through the wonderful abilities of your counsel, a young barrister going his first circuit. My description of the feelings of the lady and her lover, before and during the trial, shall be the most inimitable mingling of the sublime and the pathetic.—How do you like my plot so far? Do you think the work will succeed?"

"What is your meaning in all this?" asked Elton eagerly, yet turning away from the young barrister's mischievous smile.

“ My meaning ? Why, to write an immortal romance. Shall I not do it ? ”

“ You have a deeper meaning : you would not indulge in idle raillery on such a subject, at such a time, if you had not learnt something that will clear me from the dreadful charge against me.”

“ There it is, Elton. In vain I declare,

‘ I will be gay the whilst I may,—’

I must be grave on the bench, you know,—you always persist that there is some sentimentality under my gaiety, some reason for my folly. Moreover, you and my father never will believe that I acquire knowledge by my incredible penetration, but always assert that I have learnt what I know, that some one has told me.—It is really very provoking, and very derogatory ! ” he continued, turning to Mr. Astell, his twinkling eyelid proving the truth of his friend’s assertion, that there was a strong under-current of feeling beneath his gaiety. “ They use the silly and hackneyed phrase

about looking into a millstone. Why, hundreds of the commonplace can look into a millstone ; but I look through it and back again. I can look backward and forward too."

"I cannot doubt it," said Mr. Astell, with a smile that was irrepressible.

"That is generous, sir. I see you and I shall agree in all things : so I have a great opinion of your judgment, and shall consult you about the termination of my romance. Elton is a little sulky, I see,—envious, I conclude. Now this is my difficulty : I suppose I must end with a marriage, as all those sort of works do ; but shall I make the beautiful heroine of my little tale marry Edward Elton, all blushing and pouting as he is ?—or shall I make her so struck with the young pleader, even at first sight,—so enraptured with his wisdom and gravity, as to transfer to him her heart, and eventually her hand ? It would be hard if the young counsel went without a reward ;—do not you think it would, sir ?"

“ But consider, it would be so disinterested in the future judge !”

“ So it would ;—that settles the point. The lady shall be yours, then, Elton, and I will draw up the settlements,—that is, if she should not fall in love with me at first sight. I could not say her nay then, you know.”

“ Certainly not : in that case I yield her to you,” replied Elton. “ But this is scarcely a subject to jest on. I may be acquitted,—yet I must ever regret her warm-hearted father ; and I would I were certain of her safety.”

“ Right, Elton ; but I should have played the woman if I had not played the fool—and I usually prefer enacting the latter. Besides, I owe you a little spite for believing I had thrown you off. I am not such a madcap as you may fancy, Mr. Astell, but a steady man of business when occasion requires. My father’s last words were, ‘ I need not warn you to keep your } spirits under where your friend Elton’s interest is concerned ; and mind, if I

can be of use, call upon me.' You are a great favourite with my father, who, among other strange whims, has the fancy that you are more steady than myself: but then he cannot see through a millstone and back again. Now to business."

CHAPTER VI.

It wanted but two days of that fixed for the trial of Edward Elton. Mr. Durnsford was sitting alone in the old oak-panneled drawing-room of the Grange, with the portraits of the race of Conyers round and about him. A book was before him, but he looked not in it—his thoughts were on other things. Once he glanced on the grim starch portraits, and then turned shuddering away, for he fancied they asked of him, “Where are those who should tread these halls?”—and he dared not answer, “How should I know!” He traced a likeness in some to those who had so lately ceased to live, and, covering his face with his hands, he looked up no more.

A stately step was heard along the passage : it stopped at the door, that opened slowly ; and, without announcement, Martha Wilford entered the room, advancing till she fronted Durnsford, who, starting at her entrance, looked with surprise on her changed appearance. There was enough to startle him in her look and manner. Pale and haughty, with her brow deeply lined, she had long been ; but now there was a something more from which the gazer turned with a troubled air ;—the expression of her features was as a lull after some mighty storm — a firm resolve after a fearful struggle—the look and demeanour of one who foresees her fate and shudders, yet resolutely pursues the path that must lead to its fulfilment. She stood without speaking before Durnsford, who was the first to break the painful silence, compelling himself to tolerable composure, though avoiding her eye :

“ Ah, Martha ! I am glad to see you ; take a seat,—I wanted to talk with you.”

“ No !” she replied, waving back the chair ;
“ I have vowed not to sit beneath this roof till Philip Conyers has his rights !”

“ As you please, Martha : your ways were never as other people’s ways. I will walk back with you to the cottage, for I have much to say to you.

“ And I,” she replied, “ have but little to say to you : but that little shall be said here ! —here ! where the Conyerses have lived for many years ;—here ! where I placed their heir in the arms of its father ;—here ! where you sat at that father’s board — drank of that father’s cup ! Truly do you say that my ways are not as the ways of others. Look to yourself, if you tell not the truth. Richard Durnsford, where is Philip Conyers ?”

Durnsford started at the abrupt question : the woman saw that he did—saw that his cheek paled, his lip quivered, and that he durst not meet her eye—but she taunted him not ; and,

after a few moments, he spoke with a steady voice.

“Why do you ask, Martha?—you must know as well as myself. My old friend sleeps with his fathers, and his murderer will take his trial the day after to-morrow.”

“You have said it!” observed the woman solemnly.

Her hearer drew back involuntarily.

“I forgot that you had been away so long,” remarked Durnsford, to whom her silence was disagreeable.

“How do you know that I have been away so long?” she demanded quickly.

“Because I inquired.”

“You did?” she observed, with a strange smile.

“Yes: I told you when you entered that I wished to speak with you.”

“And what does Richard Durnsford desire of Martha Wilford? Would he fulfil in his

age the vows made in his youth? Would he now place on my finger the ring that should have graced it long years since? Would he repair the wrongs each day has deepened?"

"Nay, good Martha, this is idle talking;—you have long seen the folly of such fancies."

He spoke with an attempt at gaiety, and with a cozening manner; but he looked not on her, whilst her eye was ever upon him. She marked every change, she read every thought, she saw the uneasiness at her question which he endeavoured to conceal, and acted accordingly.

"If a folly, who gave it birth? The ring was pledged. The false must pay the penalty of falsehood!"

"Come, come, Martha, you shall have rings in abundance. You have hitherto refused gold at my hands, or you should have had it to your heart's wish. How much will content you?"

"Rings and gold at your hands?—and you dare to offer them,—the price of life and in-

nocence? There was a time when Richard Durnsford would not have ventured to hint at such a thing;—I claim but the fulfilment of a solemn vow.”

“ Be reasonable, Martha!—take the gold, and be content! Scores of rings for one!—who would grumble at such a bargain? You talk of a lover’s vows as though you had given them credit,—speaking as indignantly as a simple maiden of sixteen. You could never have trusted to such vows:—men make them to proud beauties, just to lull the conscience; but such know them in their hearts to be but idle words.”

“ Idle words!—and do you tell me to my face they were but idle words? Dare you assert I knew them to be such?”

“ This is an old grievance — let it rest. I would prove myself your friend.”

“ My friend! Did you purpose falsehood when you made those vows?”

“ You must have known they could not be

performed ;—our different stations must have told you that.”

“ Then, why were those vows made and repeated ?”

“ Because you were beautiful !—very beautiful ! Without those vows you would have scorned my suit ; and I loved you all the better for that show of dignity. Your haughty bearing suited your queen-like beauty ; but you were no simpleton, and must have known you never could be Richard Durnsford’s wife.”

“ I did not know it. I believed your words, or else I should not be the wretch I am. I loved ;—and who doubts those they love ? but my young hopes were blighted, and my deep love scorned ! Yet the deceiver can go forth with an unblushing front, ranking among the good and honourable ; whilst the deceived sits sad and desolate, a mock—a jest, even to him who made her thus. This is the world’s justice !”

“ Will these upbraidings never cease ? They

are beneath you. I would have decked your beauty forth in jewels, but you would not; I would have showered gold into your lap,—you spurned the proffer.”

“Jewels and gold! Ah! what are they to the loving heart?” she demanded passionately. “You did not know me then: you do not know me now. I yielded peace and fame; I trampled in the dust my woman’s pride, played spy:—deceived, betrayed those who had trusted me—became a demon at your bidding; but yet I did not this for gold,—I loved! You would veil the sneer at my credulity: disguise it not—I see it on your lip! I loved; and so I trusted, and I fell. And you—you proffered gold and jewels! would have had me chaffer for the price of innocence! I tell you, Richard Durnsford, that you know me not! I loved! I love you still, despite my wrongs, my pride, the struggle of long years! That love has been my curse, the mocking fiend that would

not go! Was your love ever mine? or did you only seek a tool?"

"Love! To be sure! it was a folly fitting youth, but age has made us wiser. You would not now accept the wedding-ring if I should offer it."

"No, Richard Durnsford, I would not!" drawing up her stately figure. "Now I know you never loved!" and that stern woman sighed as she spoke,—it was the last sign of woman's weakness. "You will hear no more upbraiding; I came not hither for that purpose. Where is Philip Conyers, the child of my love, the last of a long line, the son of your old friend?"

"That is a question which I can scarcely answer; but I will inquire of the servants. I fancy he is out riding."

"Stop!" laying her hand on his arm to prevent his ringing the bell. "You cannot fear being alone with me. Again I ask, where is Philip Conyers?"

“ You presume on the past. I have answered.”

“ You have answered ! Your silence speaks ! Think you that this pretended anger blinds ? Think you that I will acknowledge the puppet of your setting up ?”

“ The puppet of my setting up !—what mean you ?”

“ I mean the puppet of your setting up : with or against your will, it matters not. Think you my eyes are dimmed and my heart chilled, that I should take a stranger for my nursling ? or did you believe me dead, as reported ? Out upon you, Richard Durnsford ! here is a lacking of your usual wisdom.”

“ You are too fond of the mysterious to-day ; some other time may be more comprehensible.”

“ Yes ; I may speak too plainly then. But stay ; you go not hence till I have said my say. This pretended offence is a veil as flimsy as your wrath. Where is my boy ?”

“ I have already told you.”

“ Then you persist ?”

“ Persist in what ?”

“ Will you still declare that rude unman-
nered being to be Philip Conyers ? If so, is
Martha Wilford’s cottage the last he would
have entered ?”

“ You wrong the boy ; he did not know
you were returned.”

“ I do believe you ;—and yet I met him as
I came.”

“ Indeed !”

“ Yes ; and he knew me not.”

“ He has been absent many years ; and then
his memory seems very bad : but he will call,
I have no doubt.”

“ Will you never cease from falsehood ?—
will you ever tread the paths of guile ?—must
your last words even be a lie ? He whom you
call Philip Conyers is not Philip Conyers !
You must be in your dotage to think thus to
deceive me.”

“What am I to understand? Would you say that I have been deluded by an impostor?”

“You have not been deluded; you gave no credit to the lie. But there is one chance left you yet: give back my boy, or prove you did not seek his life. Do this, and all shall be forgotten—all go well. You know not how I loved that child!”

As if touched by pity or remorse at her earnest pleading, for an instant Durnsford seemed to waver; then, turning from her, he answered coldly, hardening himself in his guilty course.

“Some love-philter hath made thee mad: Philip Conyers is here, but you will not own him.”

“Now, I know that my boy is dead, by your upholding this impostor: but I still live, though you believed it not. I have a deed to do before I die, else had the news killed me, as you hoped. My beautiful! my good! I

shall not listen to his gentle tones, — I shall not look upon his face again. I knew it would be so ; I knew it was my doom, won by my evil deeds. I prayed that this might not be, — that my sin might not be visited on him ; but there came no answer to my prayer : — even for him I could ill play the suppliant. He is gone in his youth and strength, and yet I cumber still the earth, — but not for long. I looked to see my brave boy ruling here — here, where his poor mother pined away. The wrong done to her and others I sought to repair by devoting myself to her child. The hope was vain ! — for me there is no pardon and no reparation. One task alone remains — it shall be done ! But if a Conyers rules not here, neither shall a Durnsford,” she continued, resuming her usual commanding tone and air. “ You would have wedded with the lovely and the pure, have placed that ring upon the hand of Mabel Conyers which you once vowed to place on mine. Blind, feeble man ! you hold the mastery where

the generous and the true have ruled for centuries? Look at those portraits!—Do they not scowl upon you?—can you endure their gaze unmoved? Ha! you shrink!—you are still but man; conscience hath yet a voice. You live here? The Grange would shake at the pollution,—its ancient walls fall down and crush,—the buried dead arise to mock and rend you! And you would wed with Mabel Conyers? But she despised your suit—she mocked your vows—she fled as from a guilty wretch—she hath avenged my wrongs—her scorn hath wrung your heart. You vowed, and you were false—you smiled, and you betrayed! Hated, friendless, and despised, shall you go down into the grave!—your doom is fixed!”

She passed from before him with a haughty step, her lip curling as she marked him shudder at her words; but before she could reach the door, Durnsford sought to appease her, struggling against the spell-like power of her denunciation.

“Go not forth in anger! Speak your wishes, and they shall be fulfilled.”

She turned at his words; so looking on him, that he drew back.

“My wishes? I have but one now, and that I can accomplish. Your offer has come late.”

“Stay a moment; I have much to say to you.”

“Stay me not! I will hearken to no more lying words: I have trodden these floors for the last time,” looking round the room as if taking a farewell. “Once again—once, and once only, shall we meet!” and waving her arm with a lofty motion that kept him back, she passed from the chamber and the house.

A considerable time elapsed before Durnsford roused himself from the painful reverie into which her words had thrown him.

“I must go and appease her; she may believe my vows as of old: I can play the lover yet,” he muttered, snatching up his hat. “I

was a fool to let her go in such a mood ; but I was vexed at her speech, bewildered at her presence, believing her dead. I am shaken, too, by imaginary terrors, and late events have made me irritable, just when I have need of all my calmness. I desire not another meeting ; her look is on me still, her words are in my ear ; but prudence bids me follow her. Jealous, jealous of Mabel Conyers : that man deserves his fate who can win no good from woman's jealousy.

“ So Martha Wilford loved me, and I loved Mabel Conyers : yet I brought evil upon both, but both are avenged. The torture of the never-dying worm is mine. Martha Wilford must again be made my tool ; she would be dangerous in another's hands. Hudson, wilful as he is, must give way, or she must sanction the deceit. She knows much that I would wish unknown—how learnt I cannot tell ; but she knows not of Mabel's death, nor that she left the Grange by my persuasion. Nor does

she know that Hudson sought to take her nursling's life by my desire. I must make profit of her knowledge and her ignorance."

He hastened to the cottage; but the dark woman was not there. He made numerous inquiries, but no one had seen her; and so convinced were all whom he questioned of her not having been in the neighbourhood, that at times he almost doubted whether the singular being whose mysterious threats and fearful denunciations had so moved him was not something more than mortal woman.

Martha Wilford did not know of Mabel's death; but she knew that he had sought her nursling's life, from Hudson's confederate; though she concealed her knowledge, lest he should take alarm and fly.

CHAPTER VII.

THE day of the trial had arrived. The court was crowded to excess ;—the judge was on the bench, and all eyes were directed to the prisoner, who stood at the bar pale, yet calm ; feeling the awfulness of his situation, but undismayed by the general prejudice against him. The yells of the populace and the looks of the higher orders, as he proceeded to the court, were met with a dignity that should have hushed the clamour ; but public opinion was too strong against him, and the public mind too highly excited to be softened by a demeanour considered by most as indicating hypocrisy or impudence.

It must have been painful, most painful to

his friends, to see him standing there so young, and lately so light-hearted, arraigned on such a charge. But where were those friends who would be thus pained? Save Mr. Astell, who sat near him, occasionally addressing him with friendly warmth, to the scandal of many who attributed this to his former enmity with the deceased, and his counsel and attorney, who might be supposed to show him courtesy not altogether disinterested, he stood alone, amid a crowd of foes, without a friend, or one who ventured to look kindly on him. Even the ladies seemed grown cruel, in their horror of his crime; and he whose personal appearance would on any other occasion have won him admiration was universally pronounced a fright! a monster! — his taste for murder developed in his countenance!

Mr. Durnsford, and Philip Conyers, as he termed himself, were both in court, and sometimes divided the interest of the spectators. Their presence, owing to some uncertain ru-

mours, had been doubted ; but there they were, and the determination of the friend and the son to see justice done on the murderer, though at the expense of their own feelings, was highly applauded by the generality, whilst their demeanour excited sympathy and commanded respect.

Mr. Durnsford sat with a face so bowed as nearly to conceal his pallid cheek and sunken eye. The bloom of health was gone : for the first time in his life he looked old. Age had come suddenly upon him : he only spoke in whispers, and his frame shook as the prisoner came into court.

“ Poor Durnsford ! how he feels his friend’s death ! ” was the remark of many.

Philip Conyers sat beside him, but few words passed between them ; and the young man’s face was generally hid in his hands, which rested on the back of the seat before him. When he looked up, it was only to scowl on the prisoner.

“ What admirable filial love ! considering he had not seen him since a child,” remarked the many.

Such is man’s judgment ! Let us not decide so hastily upon the hearts we cannot see.

The trial began amid a hush of anxiety so intense, that you might have heard the breathing of a child.

There was little in the opening speech of the counsel for the prosecution worthy of remark, except that it was evident the speaker held a positive conviction of the prisoner’s guilt, which had deadened all feeling of commiseration. Former kindness received at the squire’s hands had made him zealous in his office, though it could not be said offensively so.

The first witness, a footman of Mr. Conyers’s, stated that his master had left the Grange before noon on the 13th of July, on horseback and alone, and that he had heard him say he was going to see his lawyer, Mr. Staunton.

On his cross-examination, it appeared that

Mr. Staunton and his clerk had been at the Grange about ten on the same morning. The witness could not say whether Mr. Staunton had had a parcel with him or not, but he had seen none; and had heard him say to Mr. Conyers, on leaving the house, "It shall be ready by the time you come."

Mr. Staunton's servant deposed to ushering Mr. Conyers in to her master, and hearing him say to the lawyer, as he was going away again, "Let Wildfire come if he dare!—my pistols are loaded, and I am not afraid of him, or any of his profession: I have it safe enough." She further stated having seen Mr. Conyers put something into his coat-pocket which had caused it to stick out; and that the clerk, Joseph Wigley, had been in the room during part of the visit, but had disappeared that night, and had not since been seen; and that her master had been found dead in his bed the following morning.

One of Mr. Staunton's executors corrobora-

rated the last fact, and stated that he had met the absconding clerk in a lane near Mr. Staunton's house late in the evening preceding that gentleman's death; that he had examined the papers of the deceased, and found the receipt for the legacy, particularised as a box sealed by the testator, containing jewels and money. The receipt was produced. It was dated the 13th of July, and signed "Philip Conyers."

On cross-examination, it appeared that there were no marks of violence on the lawyer's body, and, as far as the executors could judge, none of his property missing. The clerk had borne a good character till within a few days of his absconding, when Mr. Staunton had been heard complaining of unusual carelessness, and of his absenting himself without permission.

Mr. Merrick and other gentlemen proved the subsequent arrival of Mr. Conyers at the house of the former, his leaving it again for the Grange about ten, and his anxiety concerning

the safety of something in his coat-pocket. They further stated that he had mentioned having been at Mr. Staunton's that morning, and having received the legacy ; that he appeared low-spirited and nervous, would drink but little wine—showed great eagerness to depart at a very early hour, in which he had been partly thwarted by the late arrival of a gentleman who had sent word that he wished to speak with him on particular business connected with the purchase of a horse ; and that on being asked what had become of Elton, he had answered abruptly that he was gone to his father, and then turned the conversation, as though finding the subject unpleasant.

The next witness called was a labourer, who having been at work behind one of the thickets in the field on the previous day, had seen Edward Elton catch Mabel Conyers in his arms, and overheard the angry conversation that ensued, which he repeated with tolerable exactness. He also deposed to seeing the

prisoner the next morning but one searching the body of the deceased; to his running away on the approach of Dawkins and himself, refusing to stop when called, and at length being captured by the former. He likewise swore to finding a pocket-book lying by the body with the name of Edward Elton in the first page, and containing a letter purporting to be written by the prisoner's father, which, on being read in court, appeared to implicate him in his son's crime.

This witness was cross-examined by Carswell clearly, but moderately, in a manner indicating no suspicion of his truth. He never varied in his evidence, but admitted that Elton might not have seen Dawkins and himself when he ran away, though he thought he must; and that, instead of allowing his guilt whilst in his hearing, the prisoner had strenuously denied it till, finding his hearers incredulous, he had become silent and sullen, after having urged them to send for a surgeon

with pretended anxiety. The prisoner might have been feeling if there was life in the body ; he would not swear to the contrary. To the best of his belief, he had seen him throw something over a hedge as he was running away ; and afterwards, on looking about, he had found some paper with a seal attached, which had the appearance of having been torn from a box. He had assisted in searching Elton, but had found nothing on him belonging to the deceased. He accounted for being on the spot with Dawkins at such an early hour by saying that the bailiff had sent them to a distant market to drive home some cattle.

Here the cross-examination would have ceased, but, with a slight embarrassment, the prisoner whispered to his counsel, who proceeded to question the man particularly as to Mr. Conyers's promise, in the conversation previously alluded to, of giving his daughter to Elton on the production of such proofs as would convince him of his own honourable

birth and his father's integrity. The answers proved the fact of such a promise having been made. Mr. Foster then said that it had been his intention to call Mr. Durnsford to corroborate the labourer's statement of high words having passed between the deceased and the accused; but as his testimony went to nothing beyond, he would spare him the pain of giving evidence on such a distressing subject, since the prisoner did not intend to dispute that fact.

The next witness was Dawkins, who stated having been sent with Fury and Elton's portmanteau to Wexton, by Mr. Conyers, on the evening of the 12th of July, and having delivered them to the prisoner, who used violent language towards the deceased, and insisted on his taking back Fury, and telling his master that "he would receive nothing at his hands but reparation:" that he took back the horse accordingly, and gave the message to his master, who was very angry, and called Mr. Elton

“an insolent boy,” adding, that “he should repent it:” that in the evening preceding the murder, after dusk, he had seen a man skulking among the shrubs near the Grange; that he would have set the dogs at him, but that Miss Conyers forbade him, and insisted on his leaving that part of the grounds: that he went round another path, and saw some one running away, who, he would take his oath, was the prisoner, though he had heard him say the evening before, when he sent back Fury, that he should set off for —shire early in the morning. He then gave the same account of finding the body and Elton’s running away as the former witness had done, with this important addition,—that before the labourer came up, the prisoner had, in the agitation of the moment, confessed the crime, and offered him money to let him go, which he had indignantly refused; but that, notwithstanding this offer, the accused had denied his guilt in the presence of others. The pockets of the

deceased had been rifled: none of the property was found on the prisoner, but he might have thrown it into a stream within reach whilst running away, a turn in the road having concealed him from his sight for a few minutes; or he might have secreted it before, as none knew how long Mr. Conyers had been dead.

This testimony was conclusive: if any had doubted before, they doubted no longer. The man gave his evidence boldly and clearly; and if there seemed any rancour in his manner, it was pardonable in the attached servant of a cruelly murdered master.

It appeared as if the prisoner's counsel considered his evidence as conclusive as others had done, and despaired of disproving its truth or neutralising its effects, at least by cross-examination, since he declined asking him any questions then, only requesting that he should be kept in attendance.

A surgeon then gave his testimony as to the state of the body, entering into painful details

needless to repeat : to this succeeded some evidence as to the prisoner's demeanour and other trifling points, all making against him ; when the case for the prosecution closed.

There can be but one verdict, was the general opinion.

“ I thought what the fellow was from his not drinking the toast that night,” observed Sir Thomas Barrett to a gentleman who had been of the party.

“ It is a mighty crime, to be sure, to drink an extra glass or so ! but quite innocent to murder one's best friend !” replied the person addressed.

Evidence and prejudice were strong against his friend, and Carswell felt a growing distrust of his own powers, and the force of the testimony which he would be enabled to adduce ; but he knew that his cause was just, and he trusted that the innocent would yet be cleared.

The judge now called on the prisoner for

his defence, telling him that though his counsel could not address the jury, he would examine any witnesses whom he might wish to produce.

Every voice was hushed, every eye was fixed on the prisoner, as, after a moment's hesitation, he rose to defend himself from the dreadful crime with which he was charged. Conscious of being the object of general observation, and aware of the as general opinion of his guilt, his manner, on first rising, was so embarrassed, his voice so low and faltering, that the prejudice against him was increased ; many regarding these as evidence of crime : but gradually the embarrassment passed away, and the faltering voice became clear and steady. If condemned, his memory would be a reproach to his parents and his friends, whilst Mabel would shrink with horror at his name : if acquitted, rather from a doubt of his guilt than from a certainty of his innocence, he would still be unfit for the companionship of honourable men. Young as he was, his fair

prospects would be blighted, his fondest hopes must be relinquished, and he become an outcast or an exile. It was this thought—this conviction, which, overpowering the suggestions of timidity and the dread of addressing a large and unfriendly audience, mastered his momentary embarrassment, and gave to his words an earnestness and force which compelled attention, if they did not ensure belief.

“ I hope, my lord, that I shall not be accused of presumption for having declined to avail myself of the assistance of my counsel in the brief defence I have to offer. I do not underrate the value of legal aid, of which I hope to avail myself in the examination of witnesses ;—still less do I underrate Mr. Carswell’s friendship, which has induced him to undertake the defence of one charged with a crime so heinous that the accusation alone is almost enough to warrant the rending apart the nearest and dearest ties. But not to legal knowledge, not even to friendly zeal, would I

the charge
presumpt
me alone
fence pre
not my w
est by ap
young as
jury conc
of feeling
would dic
my word
est degre
on my cr
were I h
censure.
innocence

be waste of time, indeed beyond the power of words, to paint my horror at the accusation: by the evidence adduced must I alone be judged—to that alone will I appeal. I admit that the testimony already given is strong against me—I know that the general voice proclaims me guilty; nay, so much am I an object of detestation, that, were I the murderer I am supposed to be, I should plead for a trial at some other time and town, as my only hope of obtaining an acquittal: but being no murderer, having once fallen under suspicion, I rather rejoice in this general feeling—I will not call it prejudice—since, if acquitted now, as I trust I shall be, none can retain a doubt of my innocence. I have been hitherto known, and am now to be tried, under a name to which I have no claim; but the deception was unwitting on my part, having never, to my knowledge, borne another. My father will hereafter explain his letter, and why I appeared as other than I am; and the announcement of his name

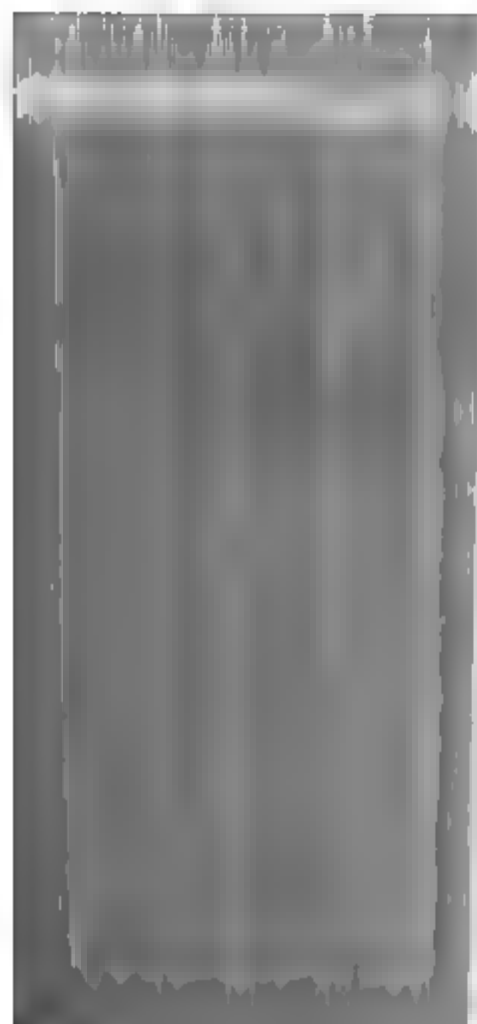
alone will prove that I have no cause to blush for a parent's shame or a parent's crimes, as has been said and believed.

“ I understand, my lord, that it is the custom of those sitting as your lordship does to administer justice, but justice tempered by mercy, to exhort and direct the jury, should they entertain a doubt of the prisoner's guilt, to give him the benefit of that doubt and acquit him : but I most earnestly entreat that no such direction may be given now ; or should your lordship still consider it incumbent on you thus to advise the jury, to that jury themselves, I say, acquit me not, if the faintest suspicion of my guilt shall linger on your minds after bearing the evidence produced in my behalf. I ask not pity, I demand justice ; I shrink not from death, but I do shrink from going forth into the world with but a whispered doubt against my fame. Condemn me to death, if justice so demand ; but condemn me not to life with the blight of suspected guilt—

of guilt so heinous, withering the flowers of my spring of life, wearing away that life itself. That were a cruelty, and not a charity.

“ I have now only to thank your lordship and the gentlemen of the jury for the patient attention with which you have listened to my address, feeling assured that you will show the same to the testimony of my witnesses, from hearing which I will no longer detain you. Conscious of my own innocence, I leave my cause without fear in the hands of my Maker, and, under him, to the judgment of my countrymen.”

The almost breathless silence which had preceded the prisoner's defence—if defence it could be called, continued some moments after he had ceased to speak: then a faint murmur of surprise arose at an address so unexpected—so unusual, and each looked into his neighbour's face to learn what had been its effect on others. Edward Elton had truly said that his words had not been weighed—they had



on by the c
been the el
heart alone ;
passionate pl
should redeem
life, though i
course he ha
lieved him
against him
ed by his app

Young Cai
quick eye ma
dress upon his

The first w
Joseph Wigle;
Staunton : bu

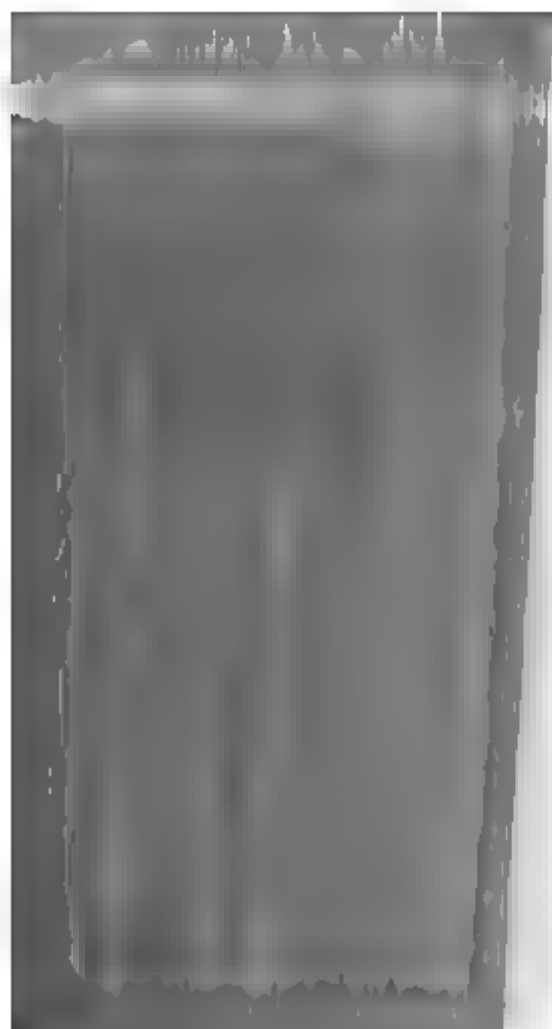
person, stepped forward, exclaiming, "I am the prisoner's first and most important witness."

A titter ran through the court: even the judge with difficulty retained his gravity, whilst the clerk stared in wonder, and young Carswell looked surprised and annoyed.

"Do not cross her," said the prisoner to his counsel; "she cannot injure, and she may serve me. Let her have her way; she must do all things as she wills:—it is Martha Wilford."

"Right, Allan Beauchamp, I am Martha Wilford!" said the witness, overhearing his whisper. "You say truly! I cannot injure, and I may serve you; though I come not solely for that purpose. I am here rather to convict the guilty than to save the innocent: let such tremble! they would take no warning—they have brought their fate upon themselves."

She looked at Durnsford as she spoke, who



Not
the narrow
look, the
customed
and unlo
part with
But not
ever much
fixed on
to make
Wilford

“ Stop
her hand
court when
“ Seize Ric
himself

nyers of the Grange—with having sought the life of his son, and forced his daughter to fly her home; besides treachery and wrong to Allan Beauchamp in former days. Seize them!" she exclaimed still more authoritatively, as the highwayman, taking advantage of the general confusion caused by the charge, made a rush towards the door.

So great was the mastery of that woman over all with whom she came in contact,—the mastery of a strong mind, clear in its purpose, mighty in its impulse,—that several involuntarily darted forward to do her bidding, and the bold Wildfire was seized and held, despite his threats and struggles.

"Who dares to lay hands on me at the bidding of a mad woman?" he demanded fiercely. "Up, Durnsford, and appeal against this outrage!"

Durnsford did endeavour to appeal; but his emotion could not be completely mastered, and his appeal was weak, his manner embar-

rassed. A scuffle ensued near where they stood; whilst those in more distant parts of the court clamoured to know the cause of the tumult, pressing hastily forward to catch a sight of the strange intruder; never before had an English court of justice been the scene of so wild a trial and so loud a din.

It was some time before the appeals of the judge and the efforts of the officers could hush the uproar. Amid all the confusion Martha Wilford maintained her usual calm, haughty demeanour; and when the tumult was stilled, there she stood where she had stood before, undismayed at the storm which she had awakened, apparently unconscious that her words had raised it, and that all eyes were now turned upon her, looking the questions—Who is she? What is her purpose?—for however dreaded in the small village of Ranford, from her seclusion, she was scarcely known beyond its bounds.

“Am I to be rudely seized at the order

and on the charge of the insane?" demanded Durnsford, breaking the silence that had succeeded to the late uproar, and striving to speak with firmness.

"Am I insane, Richard Durnsford?" asked Martha Wilford with a look and tone that made the asserter of her madness tremble. "Said I not that we should meet once again—and only once?"

"I appeal to my lord the judge," he replied in a hollow voice, looking away from his haughty accuser.

"Mr. Carswell," said his lordship with dignity, "I put it to you whether this witness should not be dismissed?—whether you really believe that her testimony can benefit the accused? Heaven forbid that I should deprive the prisoner of the slightest chance of establishing his innocence! but a court of justice is not a fitting arena for the ravings of madness or the charges of personal enmity. You call Joseph Wigley, and Martha Wilford appears, who

Mr. Di

man's w

I am at

" Bec

have it

Astell I

call him

nyers. F

Durnsfor

here to d

you shall

Martha V

dignity.

" Silence

sternly. "

" I beg

strange manner of my witness," replied the young man respectfully. "I readily admit that Martha Wilford came uncalled, but not unwished for, though she had hitherto been sought in vain. Her accusation is, as your lordship says, extraordinary, only to be justified by its truth: but I, too, must join in her appeal for justice on the guilty,—I, too, must request your lordship to order the arrest of Richard Durnsford, and Thomas Hudson, falsely calling himself Philip Conyers. Had Martha Wilford not appeared, I should have made the same charge at a more advanced stage of the defence."

"I trust, Mr. Carswell, that you are not allowing your zeal for your client to outstrip your sense of justice to others."

"My lord, I can bring forward one who saw the murder committed."

"That is a lie! for there was no one within sight," exclaimed the highwayman quickly, who, better suited for action than for thought,

never considered, till too late, the admission of guilt his words conveyed.

Neither these words, for which Wildfire could have shot himself the next moment, nor the wild glare of Durnsford, were lost on the judge, who gave instant orders that both should be secured.

“Mr. Durnsford himself will see the propriety of this detention, at least for the present,” observed his lordship with stately courtesy.

But Mr. Durnsford was not in a state to acknowledge the judge's courtesy. He had never recovered the shock of the first appearance of Martha Wilford, and her subsequent charge of the murder of his old friend, the squire, not having entertained the most remote suspicion of her knowledge of the fact. He had tried to maintain at least outward composure, and had, for a time, partly succeeded; but even this was now beyond his power. The consciousness of guilt—the assembling of

the witnesses of his many crimes, all ready to give evidence against him, forbade all hope of escape, and deprived him of the strength to rally. The injured Beauchamp was come, it might almost be said from the tomb, to reveal his treachery; a stranger was prepared to prove him the murderer of Mr. Conyers—Martha Wilford, the tool of former years, deluded into evil by her love and his deceit, was there as his accuser. And of what crimes did she not accuse him? Of what crimes might she not convict him? But would she persist? Was the love of her younger days forgotten?—was there no lingering feeling of regard that might make her pause ere she brought him to death?—no feeling of shame that would induce a concealment of crimes in some of which she had borne a part? He looked upon her, and he ceased to hope. There might still be regard in her woman's heart—there might be a shrinking from the shame which a full disclosure of the events of her

early life would fix upon herself; but there could be no doubt from her whole demeanour that she was resolved to conquer that regard, and to endure that shame. Having once determined on a full disclosure of the past, he knew her too well to doubt her carrying that determination into effect: she was not one to be turned aside from her purpose when once resolved;—she was there in the character of an avenger!

He thought of her words—“Once, and once only shall we meet again!” he remembered her fearful denunciation, and he felt that his doom was sealed. He struggled against the conviction; he tried to speak—to persuade—to deprecate: but the words died on his lips, and he gasped for breath. A glaze came over his eyes; his chest heaved convulsively; he would have waved away those around him to gain air, but the hand sank powerless by his side, and, uttering a faint groan, he fell into the arms of those behind him.

“He is dead !” said several.

“Dead? and I have done it!” exclaimed Martha Wilford in a voice so unearthly—so unlike the tones of the living beings round her, that her words were heard amid all the confusion caused by Durnsford’s sudden illness. “This is my doing!” she continued, looking in the direction where they were bearing Durnsford from the court, but speaking rather as if thinking aloud than as if addressing others. “He thought my heart would fail; but it has not! And now my task is done! our fates are sealed,—our lives are linked in bonds which none can sever: one cannot die, the other live. And I knew this, and yet I did not hesitate. Now I have no more to do with life!”

The bustle caused by Durnsford’s illness having in some degree subsided, the observation of the spectators, which had before been divided, was now wholly fixed upon Martha Wilford, all pressing forward to gain a sight of that singular woman, who was perfectly unconsci-

ous of being the object of general remark. She stood silent and motionless, her eyes fixed with a wild and painful gaze on the spot where she had last seen Durnsford, neither heeding nor answering the questions addressed to her by the judge and others, till a hand was laid on her arm to lead her from the court, and the name of Beauchamp met her ear. She started—looked vacantly round, as if unconscious of where she was, till, meeting the prisoner's look, the recollection of the past came full upon her with a distinctness and a power beyond the body's strength to bear. Pressing one hand upon her heart, as if struck by some sudden pain which she struggled to subdue by the force of her strong will, with the other she drew a packet from her bosom, which she held towards Elton, speaking with difficulty.

“Take this! I have written here what I feared my strength might fail to tell: the mind is strong,—the body is but weak. Forgive me all the wrong I did to you and yours.”

She paused some moments, writhing, as it seemed, in agony in the arms of those who, seeing her stagger, stepped forward to support her. Even in this her dying hour her pride was still her master passion. She knew that the hand of death was on her — she did not wish to live, yet she strove against her doom: she could not brook to be subdued even by the Conqueror of all.

After remaining for some moments silent, vanquished by the intensity of pain, her face hid in her hands, starting wildly from those who supported her, she extended her arms, exclaiming, “You are avenged! I come! I come!”

The next instant she fell back a corpse, the blood gushing from her mouth and nostrils.

That haughty spirit was at rest—her earthly sorrows hushed, —Time passed — Eternity alone before her,—the days of trial and probation over,—her final doom irrevocable.

She died believing Philip Conyers and Richard Durnsford to be dead,— yet both lived; the former to follow the remains of that erring woman to the grave, the latter to take his trial for that crime for which he had hoped to see another condemned.

Martha Wilford's sudden death was a shock to all: many quitted the court, and the trial was concluded as quickly as justice would admit, neither counsel thinking of a display of talent.

Joseph Wigley, after clearing his own character from any greater stain than an elopement with a young lady of a distant county, to whom he had been some time attached, fully proved that the legacy had been paid on the morning of the 13th of July to Mr. Conyers at the Grange, who had only called on his lawyer afterwards concerning the receipt, which had been imperfect, and some other business. The box, guarded with so much care by the deceased, contained a present for

Mabel, and to this the attack of Wildfire threatened by the laughing lawyer referred; the legacy, Mr. Staunton was aware, having been deposited in the squire's dressing-room. Mr. Conyers had opened the box containing the bequest in the presence of Mr. Staunton and his clerk at the Grange, and the latter swore to some of the notes and jewels, which were traced back to the possession of Wildfire, who had disposed of them soon after the murder at a distant town.

Little did Mabel think that the presents made by her supposed brother were purchased with her father's money, and given by her father's murderer.

Old Ned came forward to depose that Dawkins had said he would take revenge on Mr. Elton about Fury; and had admitted, when drunk, that he had falsified the messages from the deceased to the prisoner, and again from the prisoner to the deceased; as also what Elton had said when taken.

A subsequent cross-examination so completely exposed the villany and falsehood of Dawkins, that he was tried for perjury, and condemned to some months' imprisonment.

Mr. Elton, in his own name of Allen Beauchamp, took all the blame attached to his violent letter to his son upon himself; stated the misconception under which it had been written, and expressed the deepest regret for the death of Mr. Conyers. To clear his son from all suspicion of having intentionally appeared under a feigned name, he briefly referred to the events of his past life; thus corroborating Martha Wilford's assertion of Durnsford's treachery to himself, producing letters and papers which she had sent to Mrs. Beauchamp a few days before, containing proofs of the truth of her charges on all material points.

But the most important witness was James Bonham. His conversation with Edward Elton had increased his desire for a more active

life, and he soon after left Beauchamp Park to seek his fortune with the hardly-wrung consent of his parents, and the prediction of Aunt Judith that he would bring himself and those connected with him into trouble,—a prediction shortly verified. With no absolute vice and an amiable disposition, he was deficient in moral firmness, and easily led into error. The little money he took with him was soon expended,—fortune is more readily sought than found,—and, destitute of the means of subsistence, he was induced by want and the persuasions of a former acquaintance to connect himself with a band of poachers, several of whom were soon after suspected, and justly, of having been concerned in an extensive burglary. Shocked at the crime, in which he had taken no part, he resolved on returning immediately to Beauchamp Park, acknowledging his error, and submitting to the monotony from which he had fled; but this prudent resolution came too late to save him

from some of the consequences of his criminal weakness. Known to have been connected with the gang, and suspected of a participation in the burglary, a warrant was issued for his apprehension; and the pursuit of the officers of justice was so keen as to compel him to the utmost caution. Proceeding warily on his road homewards on the night of the murder, he secreted himself in a fissure of a quarry, on hearing the trampling of horses. From hence he saw Durnsford and Wildfire rush out on Mr. Conyers from a neighbouring brake, and seizing his bridle, demand his money; each presenting a pistol, though the latter only spoke. He saw the struggle that ensued, for the squire was not one to yield to a lawless demand without resistance. Finding that his pistol would not go off, he struck Durnsford such a violent stroke with the butt-end, as loosened the string that confined the crape upon his face, and made him let go his hold and stagger in his seat. Mr. Conyers then

turned to do the like by Wildfire, who, seeing his purpose, fired on the instant :—the squire's arm fell, and he drooped forward on his horse's neck. They dragged him down and proceeded to search him ; but, recovering from his first pain, he resisted with all his power, though Wildfire promised life if he would give up his money quietly. In the struggle, the crape fell from Durnsford's face, and the squire's sudden exclamation proved his recognition. There was a moment's pause.

“ Give up the legacy,” said Wildfire, who appeared loth to take his life.

“ Ha ! villains ! was it for this ? It is safe in my cabinet !” shouted the squire, triumphing in the thought that they would thus be thwarted.

“ There is no alternative since he knows me. It must be done !” said Durnsford.

“ Do it yourself, then !” replied Wildfire, turning away.

And Durnsford did it ! His knees pressed

on the breast — his hands grasped the throat of his old friend, till he deemed that life was quite extinct. They then searched the body, taking the box and what money he had about him; and the young man heard them arrange for a visit to the Grange and the squire's cabinet.

The whole had passed so quickly—the horror had come so suddenly before him, that the hidden witness of the crime was scarcely aware of its being committed before its completion; — and then what could an unarmed stripling do against two powerful men armed and determined? One he recognised by his voice as his cousin Thomas Hudson, who cherished no good will towards him, and might consider his own safety perilled by permitting him to live. He had heard the squire and Wildfire both call Durnsford by his name; and the moonlight streaming on his features as he knelt above his victim, showed him too distinctly to admit a doubt of his identity at a

future meeting. When the murderers departed, he would have left his concealment for the chance of assisting their victim, though there could be little doubt of their having fully effected their purpose ; but they talked of returning by the same road ; and not knowing the distance to the Grange, he could not calculate the probable time of their reappearance.

The clouding over of the moon prevented his seeing that the squire moved ; and he heard no groan. The murderers did not return that way ; but when, weary of waiting, he would have departed, he heard, or fancied he heard voices in the field above him, and crouched more closely down, till, worn out with watching, he fell asleep. Day had dawned when he awoke, and, provoked at his long sleep, seeing the danger to one situated like himself of being found so near a murdered man, he was peeping forth to ascertain if any were in sight, when Edward Elton, whom he

knew at a glance, came up the road and approached the body.

Of what afterwards occurred he gave the same account as young Elton gave to Mr. Astell, and which has been already related, fully confirming the squire's friendly feeling, and his having confided Mabel to the prisoner's care and love.

When Dawkins and his companion pursued Edward Elton, fearing a search might be made near the body, he crept stealthily from his concealment and ran unobserved in a contrary direction. An illness brought on by fatigue and anxiety kept him long at the cottage of one of the poachers, who sheltered and concealed him, and where he still lingered, though sufficiently recovered to return home, fearing to appear as a witness in Elton's favour on his own account, and yet unwilling to depart and leave him to be hanged, which appeared likely to be his fate. James Bonham, never formed to play the hero, was still

hesitating how to act, when an accident having happened to his chaise some miles from the means of repairing it, young Carswell, too eager and zealous to remain inactive, determined on walking to the next town, taking directions from the post-boy as to a near way. Directions are rarely very comprehensible, and the impatient barrister was soon at a loss, when, catching a glimpse of the poacher's cottage, he hurried thither to obtain fresh explanations.

In the very pedestrian tour during which he had become acquainted with Elton, he had also been guided over Beauchamp Park by James Bonham, and now called upon him to become his guide again. The young man readily consented to put him on the road, and learning why he was so eager to proceed, gained courage to reveal his fears and difficulties, gladly promising the delighted Carswell to give his evidence, on being assured that he should run no peril in so doing; an

assurance kept by the young counsel, who afterwards established his innocence of any greater crime than poaching, on account of which, as he had voluntarily deserted the gang, no charge was brought against him. It was the possession of this evidence in Elton's favour which had caused his friend's exuberance of spirits on their first meeting.

Not to weary with details, Carswell's hope of clearing Elton from the faintest suspicion even of guilt was fully realised. Mr. Foster admitted, in the most handsome manner, that there must be an acquittal. The jury pronounced "Not guilty," without a moment's hesitation; and the judge, in a feeling address, expressed his pleasure at being able to confirm the decision of the jury, and declare that the prisoner left the court without the slightest stain on his character.

So completely had the tide of popular opinion turned in his favour, that he was cheered as he left the court;—more loudly

still on shaking hands with honest old Ned, who drew his coat-sleeve across his eyes as he listened to his thanks. Those who were never wrong asserted that they had seen how it would end from the very beginning; and others began to qualify their former decided opinions. The female portion of the audience, ever more swayed by feeling than argument, and more accustomed to yield, changed sides at once with the best possible grace, favouring the spectators with a beautiful mingling of smiles and tears. All who had known father or son crowded round with congratulations, which, to tell the truth, were received by both with a rather chilling courtesy, when they remembered that a few hours before not one had stood up in their favour but Mr. Astell: besides, Edward Elton—or, as we ought henceforth to call him, Allan Astell Beauchamp—was impatient to seek Mabel Conyers, whom he had not seen since the evening of the murder, and whose hand he could now ask

without reproach. She had accompanied her brother and Mr. Beauchamp to Stanfield, in case her evidence should be necessary to secure the acquittal of the innocent, where they had met Mrs. Beauchamp, who had lost no time in obeying the summons of Martha Wilford to embrace her long-mourned son and husband. Her testimony not being required, she had been spared the pain of examination, and her lover received her from his mother's arms, weeping and agitated, but yielding at length to his gentle soothings.

Philip Conyers truly mourned the death of Martha Wilford; unblessed, too, by a knowledge of his safety,—following the body himself to the grave.

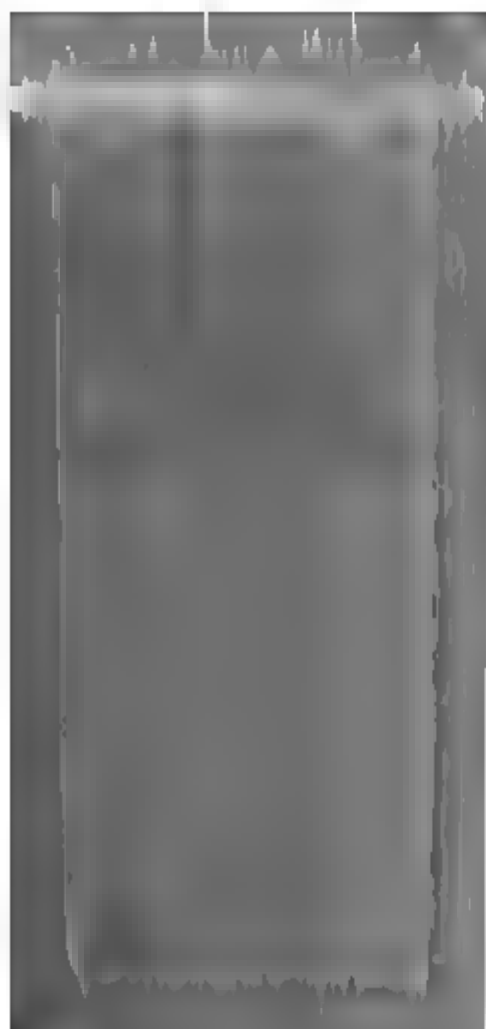
Young Carswell was in the wildest spirits at his friend's acquittal, and the thanks showered on himself by all who regarded Allan Beauchamp.

“There! my romance was founded on fact, you see, and is nearly completed,” he said,

addressing his friend and Mr. Astell. "I have gained immortal honour by my wisdom, and saved my client; for remember, I insist that it was all my doing. The fate of the lovely heroine alone remains undecided. Shall I win or resign her?"

"Just as you please," replied Allan Beauchamp with a happy smile.

"You coxcomb! holding yourself so secure. I shall consult the judge. Farewell, for a time. My love to the lovely Mabel; and I insist on her dreaming of my eloquence: I am by far the properer man of the two, if she would but think so."



THE par
to young
her life, an

“ My”
I clung
boy! my”
to him whe
‘woe to hi
I am his :
look to it !
ed shall n
hitherto w
have evil w

Not one—not two—not three;—a whole existence based on guilt—its close a death of shame.

“And who shall bring this death upon the guilty one? She who loved him!—she whom he lured to wrong. Yet not for my own injuries do I this. Had he but spared my gallant boy, he should have lived—should have had timely warning and have fled. He spared not him or his, and he must die.

“No other shall become his victim. I will confront him at the trial—I will proclaim him to the world a murderer!—the murderer of his trusting friend. I will preserve the innocent, whom he would crush—repair to Beauchamp and his son the wrong I did, and then I have no more to do with life. I am resolved!—all shall be told; and lest the lips should fail to tell the tale, the hand shall trace the history of crime. The body worn by suffering may be weak—the mind

shall waver not. Let those who read be warned. He who takes one step in crime can rarely choose where he would stop.

“ At seventeen I was not as I now am. Long years of misery and remorse have done their work, and the Martha Wilford of her younger days, who lent a willing ear to flatterers, reading her beauty in their looks, would have started had the vision of her present self come up before her. Misfortunes fell upon our family, and we who had been independent became beggars. Father, mother, brother, died ; — I was alone !

“ The tastes and habits of my former station made poverty more galling, whilst pride blighted the few remaining flowers that might else have blossomed in my path of life.

“ Richard Durnsford had known my parents and myself in better times, and we had ever thought him, what the world thinks him still, kind and honourable. He proposed my entering the service of Mrs. Beauchamp more

as a humble friend than a mere servant. My pride rebelled at servitude ; but his uncle resided in the neighbourhood—he was often there, and to have me near him was, I thought, the reason why he urged the point. I guessed not that he meant I should become his tool—the demon worker of his will.

“ Mr. Beauchamp was in the splendour of his good fortune. Friends, wealth, and an affectionate and lovely wife were his:—he never thought that he might lose all these. He gave to all who asked, because it pained him to say No : he pitied new misfortunes, but, not self-experienced in change, he never guessed the sensitiveness of those who had fallen upon evil times. There had as yet been no check in his prosperous course, and he could not tell how a word—a look—could gall the poor and proud. He has learnt the lesson now—let him not forget it ! He meant me no unkindness ; but he chafed and fretted me:—he would have given to me, as he

gave to others, had I stooped to ask ; but he wounded my feelings and pained, what some called, my presumption.

“ Of his lady I would say nought unkind. If I thought her cold, unfeeling, then, refusing me the observances which my former station might have obtained, let the blame rest on my own pride and the duplicity of Durnsford, who had not dealt fairly by either ; wishing, for his own views, that I should hold myself aggrieved. He had never stipulated with Mrs. Beauchamp for those privileges which he averred had been readily conceded ; and, too proud for complaints, which might have set all to rights, I cherished in secret unfriendly feelings towards Beauchamp and his wife. In my middling station in the household, I could have no confidant—no friend ; and Durnsford, who met me constantly in secret, aggravated my sufferings, pouring caustic into the wounds which were scarcely bearable before.

“The young heir of the Beauchamps was committed to my care, and I grew much attached to him,—for even my proud heart felt the want of something to love and cling to.

“Richard Durnsford sought and won my love. I was to be his bride—but not then:—he was poor—he must wait for his uncle’s death, then hourly expected, whose favour he should forfeit by a union with me. The uncle lingered; I saw his nephew day after day—poured into his ears my burning tale of fancied wrongs—listened to his soothing words—looked for his presence, as my only solace;—and day after day he soothed and smiled, speaking of our future union.

“He only talked of love—I felt it!—his words were false—my feelings real. What matter how?—enough—his mastery was complete. His uncle died—yet he still delayed. I prayed, I implored him to fulfil his vows: I had no power to command, to threaten.

one, a gentleman
but he ever
desired: even
he turned their
unthinking per
not last for ev
An enemy, a
possessed him
those embarr
proved dishon
which he had
recovered — an
champ Park a
distance.

“ Mrs. Beau
looked deliott;

Mrs. Beauchamp's health improved, and her cousin, Mabel Duncombe, came to spend a few days at the Park, accompanied by her harsh brothers; whilst her lover, Mr. Astell, was secreted in the neighbourhood, anxious to persuade her to a clandestine union, to save her from a marriage with Mr. Conyers, to which her brothers were resolved to force her. She was beautiful and gentle. I pitied her!—she and her lover trusted me, and I betrayed them! but not, at first, intentionally.

“ My charge improved in health, but I still remained at the cottage, which allowed of more frequent visits from Richard Durnsford. It was then and there that he first revealed his views. He hated Mrs. Beauchamp, whose hand he had sought, not from love, but ambition, believing a false report of her wealth; he hated Mr. Beauchamp because he had won her love, and for some personal slight:—he would have revenge on both. He had aided Mr.

Garnier in buying up debts and securities, that would enable him to ruin the uncalculating Beauchamp; he had taken some part in the villany of his agents, and urged him on, through others, to increased extravagance. I know not how all this was done,—I did not understand the details; but I shuddered and turned away as he declared with fiendish triumph that he could, and would bring woe and ruin on Beauchamp and his wife. The information which my residence in the family had enabled me to afford had greatly aided his plans, unknown to me; but now he called upon me to take an active share in his villany.

“Mr. Beauchamp was to be at Durnsford’s house on the following day to receive some money due to him from the latter, whence he would proceed to the Park, though not expected till the succeeding morning; having feared to fix an earlier period, lest he should disappoint his wife. Durnsford knew from me that Mrs. Beauchamp, wishing to spare her

husband anxiety, had never mentioned her illness, but continued to write when scarcely able to hold her pen, though her letters had necessarily been short and infrequent, and, she feared, constrained. He knew that, fearful of the violence of the Duncombes, she had concealed Mr. Astell's attachment to her cousin, only known to herself since her husband's departure: he knew, too, that, anxious to serve her cousin, which her timidity and vacillation rendered difficult, and pitying her lover, she had appointed to meet Mr. Astell in a secluded part of the grounds, to consult with him how she might best assist his views. I was to be there with the child to watch that the fierce brothers did not rush upon the lover, whose affection for their sister it was supposed they suspected. It was Durnsford's plan to infuse suspicions into Mr. Beauchamp's mind when he paid the money, and send him a note, as from a friend, warning him of the intended meeting. The note from Mrs. Beau-

champ to Mr. Astell, appointing the place of meeting, accidentally picked up, aided his views. Beauchamp, proud and sensitive to a high degree, he felt convinced would proceed to the appointed spot, and find his jealousy confirmed. What Durnsford expected would ensue,—whether some sudden burst of violence, some act of rashness that would oblige him to fly the country, or subject him to imprisonment, perhaps death, I know not,—I did not ask ;—it was enough for me that Durnsford required I should continue within hearing,—show I was placed there to watch, and, should Beauchamp stay to listen, break off the conference with the alarm of intruders, just at such a point as should confirm his suspicions. What was further intended he did not say ; but, probably, he hoped for profit, as well as gratified revenge, by forcing Beauchamp to some deed of violence. I say that he required me to act this part, for it was more than a request. I started with horror at the

first proposal; but he sneered as I spoke of virtue. None care how it came to pass: sufficient that he pleaded as a lover,—persuaded as the false one,—vowed as he had vowed before. ‘Do this, and you shall be my bride within six months.’ I listened, and I yielded. I knew nothing of his arrangements: he had won me to do the work of the Evil One, his master; but I hated myself the while. I could not bear to look upon the child who smiled on the destroyer of his parents. I asked no questions,—I did but as he told me.

“All chanced as he desired; such ever seemed his fortune. The conversation overheard by the half-hidden Beauchamp was such as to confirm his belief of his wife’s love for his friend. Durnsford himself, concealed by the shrubs, gave me the signal to break up the meeting. I obeyed;—the furious Beauchamp rushed forward to destroy wife or friend; but a branch was in his way, and he fell. Before he rose, Durnsford was at his side, talking of

bailiffs in the house, and urging him to concealment till his friends could make some arrangement. He succeeded in persuading, as he always did, and Mr. Beauchamp was leaving the grounds, when, seeing the child in my arms, he tore him from me with wrathful imprecations on his mother. I pleaded—struggled—but in vain: a whispered threat from Durnsford made me yield. I was ill:—days passed before I left my room.

“ When I saw Durnsford again, I questioned of my charge, of his beautiful mother, of his wretched father. His burst of triumph was appalling! The mother and the friend were far away, seeking the husband where he was not, deluded by feigned letters written by Durnsford, whose schemes required their absence. He had taken care that Miss Duncombe’s brother should be warned of the intended visit of Mr. Astell, who, in spite of Mrs. Beauchamp’s prohibition on account of the bailiffs, unhappily persisted in his rash

design, and reached her dressing-room. The Duncombes rushed in upon him ; blood would have flowed but for Mrs. Beauchamp's firmness and Miss Duncombe's subsequent promise to marry Mr. Conyers, who knew nothing of her repugnance. Early the next morning a letter was brought to Mrs. Beauchamp, purporting to have been written by a friend of her husband's at his desire, requesting the presence of herself and Mr. Astell without a moment's delay at an obscure village in the North. They departed on the instant ; the former not even delaying to see her child, but confiding him to my care.—My care ! I had betrayed all who trusted me !

“ ‘ She will see Allan Beauchamp and her child no more ! there are evil reports of her fair fame ! All this is my doing,’ concluded Durnsford triumphantly. ‘ We are avenged !’

“ I shuddered at his look. ‘ And Allan Beauchamp and his boy, where are they ?’ I demanded.

“ ‘Dead! the deep waters flowing over them!’ he replied in a horrid whisper, drawing closer as he spoke. ‘This, too, is my doing! we are well avenged!’

“ ‘I started from his touch. ‘Richard Durnsford, speak: how came they by their deaths? Is there murder on your soul?’

“ ‘What if there were?’ he demanded with a withering sneer.

“ ‘I was indeed his slave, the slave of sin, and I was silent. How dared I reprove?’

“ ‘Their death was accidental,’ he said after a pause.

“ ‘Swear it!’ I exclaimed; ‘clear me from the sin of murder!’

“ ‘I do swear it!’ he replied.

“ ‘I understood not then the meaning of his smile.

“ ‘Beauchamp Park had passed into the possession of another; and he showed a deed signed by Allan Beauchamp, empowering him

to receive all monies due to its late owner, and antedated to suit his purpose.

“ Mrs. Beauchamp returned from a fruitless search to learn the death of her child and husband, and after a severe illness left the country. Shocked at the misery of so many, a misery inflicted partly through my means, on recovering from a dangerous relapse, I talked of revealing the truth; but the tempter came again with his threats and his vows, and I told the tale he fabricated. And his vows, how were they fulfilled? He delayed, grew cold, then irritable, and at length declared that I should never be his bride. He would have mocked, but he dared not. From that time his power over me was gone; he had dragged me down to sin, but he ruled no more. I could not return to innocence; but I had ceased to be his tool. Silence was all that he could hope—it was all he then desired; and that I promised, if he urged me not too far—if he crossed

not my will in other matters. I scorned him, and yet I would have given my life for his. Had I died, he would have smiled. I knew this, and yet I hated not. He offered money to ensure my secrecy; but I refused it indignantly, bidding him depart and see me no more. I would owe him nothing. If I scorned servitude, I scorned him more. I knew not then what I learnt afterwards, or I might not have promised silence.

“Durnsford persuading the wretched Beauchamp to submit to his guidance, to avoid seizure by the bailiffs, led him to the cottage of my cousin Judith Hudson, who, with her husband, had lately settled in the neighbourhood. The next morning Beauchamp was in a burning fever. Durnsford desired not that he should live, as his death would enable him to repossess himself of the money, which he had paid, and secure him from detection; but Beauchamp had once shown kindness to Judith, who boldly withstood the evil purpose

which he intimated, nursing the sick man night and day, though Durnsford threatened to disclose what would hang her husband, on whom she doted despite his harshness and his evil ways.

“ Mr. Beauchamp recovered, and, influenced by Durnsford, though he guessed it not, resolved on retiring to some distant and secluded spot, never again to mingle with his fellow men, from whom he had received, as he believed, nothing but wrong. His friend and his wife had fled together. Mr. Conyers refused to pay a just debt without the production of papers which he knew could not be produced; whilst all his former flatterers and parasites joined in the cry against his profusion and ostentation. Such were the tales that met his ear through Durnsford’s contrivance, whom he never suspected of having deceived him, as well as his wife and friend, or of having warned Mr. Conyers that he who applied for repayment of the money lent was an

impostor. He fixed the time for his departure, but refused to tell Durnsford whither he was going, and, urged by his hostess, who seemed strangely eager to be rid of him, departed with his child earlier than he had intended. Poor Judith knew that Durnsford, aided by her husband, sought the life of her guest in order to prevent detection, and to repossess himself of the money he had paid; but, loving her husband too much to reveal what might endanger his life, she hurried Beauchamp forth before the appointed time, hoping that he might thus escape an attack. All her precautions were in vain.

“Hastening to the spot at which a meeting with his confederate had been arranged, Durnsford found Hudson lying on the ground a corpse, the warm blood still trickling from the wound which had caused his death. Whilst on his way, he had heard two shots, and seen a horseman in the distance; and his fears told him that from Beauchamp's hand had the high-

wayman received his death-wound, and that on the highwayman's horse was Beauchamp now seeking safety in flight.

“The slayer had been slain,—the purposed victim had escaped. Durnsford hurried on, tracking his foe as he best could by the faint moonlight. He traced him to the water's edge,—he found the horse; but there was no boat on the tranquil stream. The next day articles were found in the river known to have belonged to the late owner of Beauchamp Park and its heir: the body of a child was discovered some days after; and Durnsford triumphed, thinking himself secure, though vexed that the money had been lost with its possessor.

“For months was Judith Hudson a maniac; and even now her senses sometimes wander. The fate of her husband—the wild course of her only child, press heavily upon her; and a name—a likeness, have power to disturb her mind. Though cousins, there has been little

love between us ; yet would I not bring death to her son, had he not done evil to those whom I vowed to protect.

“ I entered the service of Mrs. Conyers. Her first-born was committed to my care, and I vowed to devote my life to his welfare,—to repair, as I best could, some of the evil I had done :—but for me there is no reparation ! I must go down to the grave with the curse of guilt upon me to the last ! I doted on the child, and he is gone !

“ My fondness for the boy caused me at one time to look on his sister with jealousy, as likely to possess some of that love and wealth which I wished centred all in him. I refused to be her nurse ; and, displeased with some expressions of Mr. Conyers, who, I was aware, had never cordially liked me, I left the Grange soon after the death of his lady, and retired to a cottage near. But I was little separated from my charge by the removal, for he came to see me every day. My love grew

hour by hour,—my pride softened towards him,—my will bent to his.

“Durnsford now came often to the house; and, fearing that my silence might not be maintained, he again proffered money, which I scorned as before; and we then met almost as strangers—none guessed the past. I marked him exasperate Mr. Conyers against Mr. Astell; I noted him twining round his unsuspecting friend, and I guessed that he meant him harm. I bade him attempt no evil against the father of my boy, or the world should know he had sought Beauchamp’s life. He started, for he knew not that Judith had told me all, and, aware that I would not be trifled with, promised obedience.

“Philip Conyers grew up rash, daring, and high-spirited. Haughty to others, I was gentle to him; and he was uncontrolled. Generous, but quick of temper, thanks to Durnsford’s promptings, there was continual bickering between him and his father; and, at length, the

boy resolved to depart and seek fortune for himself. Not to see him—not to hear his glad-some voice, day after day, month after month, was making the earth to me as a dark dungeon. I argued—I implored—in vain,—he was not to be moved. He wiped away my tears, talked of the riches he would bring me in my old age, and remained unchanged. He left me ; and I regretted it the less, since Durnsford had latterly engaged him in desperate adventures, and had gained an influence over him that could not be for good. Others knew not whither he had gone—but I knew ; and the ten miles I walked were but as one, when I held his letter in my hand. I would have died rather than beg for myself, but I begged for him, that he might receive an education somewhat fitting his birth ; and in the sanguine spirit of youth he thought to repay me a thousand-fold. From the love which he had borne his mother, Mr. Astell gave all I asked, though he knew not for what, or at least but guessed, for I told none where

my darling was : I wished none to divide his regard with me. I proposed other plans, but the boy whom I had reared had learnt to have his will :—he would go on the sea, and I was forced to consent, and arrange as he wished. A distant relation of my own received him on board his vessel—a merchantman—for he would not enter the regular service. I cared less, thinking that he would the sooner be disgusted and give up the fancy. Not so ! his passion for the sea increased ; and he made many voyages. How have I trembled when the storm was sweeping on ! How have I wept when the tempest raged around ! The captain died, and he stayed on shore for weeks. I was with him—listening to his silver voice, and looking in his face ;—and he repaid my love. Fearing that Durnsford would induce his father to disinherit him, I urged him to return to the Grange, thinking that none could resist his frank and kindly manner, for the world's discipline had done him good. Feeling that he had been fro-

ward, he had long wished to see his father, and wrote to ask his forgiveness, and permission to return after his next voyage, on which he was to depart in a few days with a new captain. No answer was returned. Could not Richard Durnsford tell us why? He sailed, and I returned to Ranford;—his ship was driven back—obliged to refit—and, having nothing else to do, he took an excursion into the country. It was then that he thwarted Thomas Hudson in some purposed rudeness towards a village girl, never guessing him to be the noted Wildfire. A few days after, he was attacked by two highwaymen; not for gold, as, being unarmed, he gave up his purse at once, but for hire and revenge; and he would have been their victim, had not Allan Beauchamp, then only known as Edward Elton, come to his aid, fighting so boldly that the baffled ruffians were beat off; but not before Philip had recognised in one the man whom he had crossed. He wrote me this, and the after kindness of his preserver, with some re-

marks on the churlishness of his new friend's father; but I dreamt not of whom he spoke, under the name of Elton. He added that he must sail the next day, but would come to Ransford immediately on his return, to try what his presence might effect with his father.

“ Mabel Conyers came back to her father's house. She looked on me with dread, as others did; but I forgave her, for her likeness to her mother, and her kind mention of her absent brother. I resolved to guard her too; and I saw that she would need my care, for Durnsford had his eye upon her for his bride. I could read it in his softened tone—in his admiring look—though none beside suspected it. An act of humanity brought Edward Elton before me:—his presence called up visions of the past. I thought of what my boy had written of him and of his father—I looked more keenly, and I knew him, from a slight mark, as the babe whose slumbers I had watched, whose parents I had wronged. How did I rejoice

that Beauchamp and his son had not perished in the waters ! The thought that I had caused their death no longer crushed my spirit—I was not a murderess. I marked young Beauchamp's love for Mabel Conyers, and warned them of their danger. I knew Durnsford would cross that love—and he has crossed it—but the maiden never will be his. The murderer shall not wed with the pure—the fierce wolf mate with the gentle lamb. Time passed—my boy came not, and I resolved to go and seek him early on the morrow. I could not rest in my chamber, and I went out into the calm moonlight ; — the stillness of the night was a reproof to my restless spirit. All could find rest but me, I thought. The birds were roosting in the trees—the flowers had folded up their leaves—and the stars looked down from their grey home with a sweet and peaceful smile : but I was to know no rest again—I should smile no more ! Yet all beside slept not—the murderer was abroad ! Horsemen came speeding down

the narrow lane bounding my little garden, and I glanced through the boughs to see who came that lonely way at such an hour. There were rough stones in the road, and the first horse stumbled.

“ ‘Confound the brute! does he see the squire’s ghost?’ exclaimed his rider, reining him sharply up.

“ ‘Hush! you may be overheard, and our plan thwarted,’ replied a voice I should have known among a million. Had I not cause to know? It was Richard Durnsford’s!

“ ‘A fool’s plan—and a fool’s deed too! You should have learned that the money was left at the Grange. It is the blackest act I have had hand in,’ answered the first speaker, sharply, and on they swept beyond my hearing.

“ I marvelled on what evil deed he who had led me into sin had been employed; and then I thought of all the past; and there I stood as when he passed before me, the gentle breeze cooling my burning brow. A while, and the

same wild clatter came again, breaking the stillness of the night; and again the horsemen speeded past. I looked upon them; but I saw not their faces, for a black mask was on them both.

“The morning dawned, and I went on my lonely way to seek Philip Conyers, the child of my affection. I reached the port from whence his ship, the Newfoundland, had sailed. She had not returned—she never would return! Part of her wreck had been picked up on the open sea, but none had heard of her crew; and it was said that all had perished. I shed no tears—I have shed none since—but I felt that the death-stroke had been given, though I might linger for a while.

“For days I sat on the shore looking over the restless waves with a wild hope that they would restore my boy: but he came not, save in my sleep—sometimes as in his childhood—sometimes as when I had seen him last—but oftener with his dark curls dripping, tangled with sea-

weed, and his bright eyes glazed. I hated the sea, and yet I loved it. It had caused his death, but it had given him a grave.

“The rumour reached me that Mr. Conyers had been murdered on the night before I left my home, that Edward Elton was to take his trial for the crime, and that young Philip Conyers had returned, and was residing at the Grange.

“I tarried not by night or day, so much I longed to see my boy before I died. I hoped he had been saved. Better never to have felt the hope, whose crushing left me still more desolate. He who resided at the Grange was not Philip Conyers, but Thomas Hudson. I knew him from his likeness to his father, though I had not seen him for some time; and Durnsford knew him better still, and yet he owned him for the heir. Then, and not till then, was I convinced of my boy's death. If unassured of this, Durnsford had not set up or owned this puppet, nor had he dared to do so even then, had he believed that I

still lived. Here was fresh guilt and fraud. Mabel Conyers too had fled—fled to avoid her guardian's suit; for this, at least, was true. Her father had been murdered, and on that very night when those two horsemen passed before me: they were the murderers! Yet Edward Elton would be tried—might be condemned. No! I resolved to save him—the guilty should not always triumph—the innocent should be avenged! But for Durnsford, my boy had never left the Grange—had never slept beneath the sea. Yet I would not reveal his crimes till I had spoken to him once again. I would probe him with my questions. If he showed repentance, if he disavowed his puppet, he should have time to flee: if not, then he must die! He had been warned to cease from sin, and must abide the consequence of crime.

“I visited the Grange for the first time for many years. I saw Durnsford's start when I stood before him: he had believed me dead, as many had reported, from my absence. I

questioned him ;—he persevered in crime ; he mocked my sorrow, and my love :—his doom is sealed !

“ Last night a gladdening dream came to my worn-down spirit. I saw my boy in his father’s hall, and well I thought the place befitted him : I saw Beauchamp and his lady standing together, looking on each other, as they had done in their young days. I saw their son, with the hand of Mabel Conyers held in his, he looking upon her, she looking down ; and this they said had been my doing. I strove to join them, but a wide, deep chasm stretched between : they called me, but I could not pass to them—they could not come to me.

* * * *

“ There are dark visions crowding on my mind, mysterious and gloomy thoughts that will not be repelled. A horrid dread hangs over me. I fear, who never feared before. Can these things be the shadows of quick coming death ? I would fain pray ; but lowly

words are strangers to my tongue. Away ! away ! I will not thus be conquered,—I will go forth and avenge my boy.”

Here closed the history of the life of Martha Wilford, the abruptness and occasional incoherence of the writer leaving it doubtful whether her belief in the reported loss of Philip Conyers, on whom she had so doted, and her resolution of revealing the crimes of Durnsford, which must bring death to him and shame to her, had not in some degree affected her intellects.

From youth to age pride had been her besetting sin: even at the last, she writhed under a proud remorse, instead of bowing in humble penitence. She—she alone must repair to man the wrong that had been done: she must avenge the innocent. She was too proud to bend before her Maker—too haughty to leave vengeance to another, though that other were the Almighty. She thought only of sin

as an offence against man, not as rebellion against a just and holy God.

Though the outward cover of the packet was directed to Edward Elton, the contents seemed to be addressed to no one in particular, appearing rather a sudden outburst of passionate remorse to ease her own mind, than a calm confession to serve or enlighten another. Probably she had been undecided as to whom to confide it, until after its conclusion.

Some remnant of her early love for Durnsford had evidently lingered to the last, proving her punishment, as she had said.

The Newfoundland had been wrecked as supposed, but Philip Conyers and two of the crew, after suffering many hardships whilst tossing about in a small boat without sail or oar, and nearly destitute of provisions, were at length picked up by a whaler on her outward voyage, on board of which they were obliged to remain till the close of the whaling season, no opportunity offering of an earlier return to England.

CHAPTER X.

RICHARD Durnsford and Thomas Hudson were indicted at the same assizes for the murder of Philip Conyers. Had this charge not been proved, several others would have been brought against them, besides the attempt on the life of the young heir of the Grange. Wildfire's exploits had been too daring and too numerous to leave him, if once identified, a chance of escape; he therefore took little trouble to provide a defence; and as Carswell did not carry into effect his laughing proposition of getting off a second murderer at the same assizes, his fate was soon decided. The jury, without retiring, pronounced a verdict of "guilty" against both prisoners, and the judge left them for execution.

Edward Elton's trial for the murder of Philip Conyers was the first cause tried at

those assizes; that of Richard Durnsford and Thomas Hudson, for the same offence, was the last.

Durnsford, though not sufficiently ill to require a postponement of the trial, never recovered the shock of Martha Wilford's appearing against him, and exposing the villany of his past life. At times he tried to rally and delude those around him into a belief of his innocence, but he himself felt the feebleness of his attempts, though even to the last, at the foot of the gallows, he called himself an injured man, unjustly condemned, thus endeavouring to excuse the weakness and terror which he showed. He sought to deceive with his dying breath: his whole life had been a lie; his earthly course a course of wickedness; a sinful thirst for gain. The only spark of better feeling which he exhibited was his pleasure on hearing that Mabel had escaped; but this was overpowered by his sudden, though almost instantly checked, burst of fury, on learning that her brother also lived. Martha

Wilford's sudden death, and his obstinate silence, or deluding assertions, left much of the past a mystery. His crimes were evident to all, but the skilful machinery by which they had been effected was not so apparent. None knew, for he told not, his course of crime; whether he had been led on step by step, or had plunged at once into its depth. The highwayman retained his bold, frank manner: he had counted upon death, and if it must come, it must. He always spoke with regret of the Squire's murder, saying he knew whilst it was doing that some evil would come of it. He refused to listen to the chaplain—boasted of his bold exploits and hair-breadth escapes—mocked at Durnsford's pusillanimity, and died, as he had lived, reckless and impenitent. The news of her son's condemnation was incautiously communicated to his mother. For a moment she stared wildly on the speaker, muttered—"I knew it would be so;" and, sinking back in her chair, was dead before assistance could be procured.

The papers sent by Martha Wilford, and which none knew how she had obtained, unknown to Durnsford, would have enabled Mr. Beauchamp to recover much of his property; but their production was not necessary, as far as respected Beauchamp Park. Mr. Garnier having seen his family die off, one by one, and pining away himself under a painful and incurable disease, no sooner heard of the reappearance of Beauchamp and his son, than he made over to the former the greater part of his large possessions, praying his forgiveness for the injury he had done him.

“How have I deserved these blessings? How shall I prove my gratitude for them?” said Mr. Beauchamp, pressing his wife’s hand as he looked out over the park from his former dressing-room. “This sudden burst of happiness is more than I can bear; it bows me to the earth—it makes me feel my utter worthlessness. I was no careful steward of the blessings lent me in my early days: and yet I murmured and turned rebel when I lost them.

They are restored, and now I feel my sin. Who drove me from my earthly paradise?—myself—my pride—my craving after man's applause—my heedlessness of Him who gave this good. These were the flaming swords that drove me forth. And now my home,—my friend,—my wife,—all!—all restored! How shall I show my love and gratitude? How keep a humble heart, without which wealth is but a snare?"

The marriage of Allan Beauchamp with Mabel Conyers was fixed to take place soon after the expiration of her mourning for her father: her brother, when asked to bestow her on his friend, gaily protesting that he should be glad to resign her guardianship, having had full proof of her talents for elopements: and yet he sighed as he concluded, for her gentle love had so won his affection, that he felt the Grange would be lonely without her smiles, and silver tones. If they had none of the remembrances of early childhood to bind them to each other, the peculiar cir-

cumstances under which they had first met, and their orphan state, the last of a noble race, had compensated for their absence. In his affection he would have increased her portion, but neither the lover nor his father would hear of it: on the contrary, knowing that the Grange had many incumbrances, they declined receiving anything with Mabel beyond her bridal outfit, leaving it to Mrs. Beauchamp, who had long since established her influence over him, to reconcile him to the measure. He exclaimed and protested; but Mabel's caresses, and the tears in Mrs. Beauchamp's eyes, as she spoke of her love for his mother, declaring that she looked on him as a second son, won him to submission. As for Mabel, she only thought of money as a means to make others happy; but that poverty or riches could increase or lessen affection, was a fact that she could never believe.

“I do not quite like your taking no portion to your husband: with his great wealth,

Allan Beauchamp may despise you for it hereafter," remarked her brother.

"Now, shame on you, Philip, to think that Allan Beauchamp could ever be so ungenerous ! Does he not prize me more than gold ?"

"You are a most incorrigible simpleton," replied her brother, kissing her glowing cheek. "It is a duty in your friends to take charge of your gold ; for you will never learn how the world values it."

The Beauchamps did not despise Mabel for bringing no portion, they loved her too well to have such a thought ; but had they desired wealth, that desire would have been gratified, as Mr. Astell declared his intention, after freeing the Grange of its remaining incumbrances, of dividing his property between Mabel and his god-son.

"No remonstrances, and no thanks," he said, "except from Mabel ; she values my regard as she should, more than my gold ; and her voice has the spell of memory,—my love for the dead is now transferred to the living."

"Are you sure that the settlements will be down in time?" asked Allan Beauchamp of young Carswell, as they stood together with Philip Conyers in the library at Astell Court, a few days before that fixed for the wedding.

"Bless me! don't be so impatient, man! I verily believe you grudge me my few holidays, lest, not being at my father's elbow, the deeds should be delayed one little hour. Oh, Miss Conyers! I pity you the being condemned to a union with such an impatient spirit as Allan Beauchamp. You had much better have had me," he continued, addressing that young lady as she entered the room with Mr. and Mrs. Beauchamp, and their host. "I am half inclined to be magnanimous and offer again, only you laugh so mischievously, instead of blushing, as you can so prettily."

"What is the matter?" asked Mabel, looking up in his face with her own sweet smile.

"What is the matter, indeed? why that impatient wretch wants to send me back to

town to hurry the settlements. The poor clerks are nearly worried out of their lives as it is, not having had a full night's rest for the last month ; whilst the names of Conyers and Beauchamp are become as hateful in their ears as the name of the evil one to the holy. To let you into a secret which I should entrust to no one else, he is thoroughly weary of playing the lover."

"Is he?" replied Mabel, with one of those blushes some thought so beautiful.

"Yes, he is, notwithstanding your incredulous tone. Why else should he be in such a hurry to throw off the character? I warn you to have all your blonde, and point, and muslin, and gauze,—you see I know all about it,—ready the night before: there will scarcely be time in the morning even to put on becoming looks, for he will certainly have us all prepared by five at the latest; and should the settlements be by any chance delayed—"

"—He will persuade the lady to elope with

him, knowing her taste for such adventures,—carrying off young gentlemen, whether they will or no,” interposed her brother.

“Shame upon you all ! I shall take Mabel under my protection,” said Mrs. Beauchamp. “You admire her blushes so much that you make it your pleasure to awaken them, without any pity for her confusion.”

“Not me, my dear mother ! You do not accuse me of this ?” said her son.

“Oh dear, no !” observed Carswell ; “you never blush at anything that Allan Beauchamp says ; do you, Miss Conyers ?”

“I can never be angry with anything that Mr. Carswell says.”

“I am disarmed, Miss Conyers !—dumb !”

“For how long ?” asked his friend mischievously.

“Till you provoke me past endurance ; so, have a care !”

“If you take all the ill-used under your protection, Mrs. Beauchamp, you certainly ought to extend that protection to me ; for I do maintain that I have received infamous

treatment at the hands of more than one,—the greatest delinquent, my demure little sister,” said Philip Conyers. “I engage in a perilous adventure, at the bidding of a young damsel, in the most disinterested manner imaginable; I gallop at her desire in a style fitting none but the wild huntsman of other lands; I carry her down a precipitous rock; I buffet with the waves to bring her a boat; I guard her on the water; I escort her on the land; in short, I perform all the duties of a knight-errant; and just as I have made up my mind to the propriety, nay, absolute necessity, of falling in love with my fair charge, and claiming her hand as my reward, lo! she declares herself to be my sister. With all due respect for the canons, I transfer my affections to Mrs. Beauchamp, thinking, from the appearance of her husband, that he cannot long survive. No sooner have I done this, than that husband drinks of the elixir of life, and becomes young again on the instant, purely to annoy me.”

“Yes, Beauchamp is a different person from Elton; he has drunk of the elixir of life—

happiness ! and, with the blessing of Heaven, hopes to live many years," observed that gentleman, with a smile at the young man's sally.

" Ah, sir, I thought so. Then, my friend, to prove his regard, carries off my little Mabel, leaving me a lonely bachelor. I know nothing but persuading the pretty Susan Wickam to take me instead of Ralph Preston : it will not be the first time that I have been his substitute."

" I doubt your power of persuading her to that," observed his sister.

" You are rude, Mabel. What ! you think her as great a simpleton as yourself, rating love higher than gold ? I really am a very ill-used man, — no one will have me. You must take my deplorable case into consideration, and provide a remedy, Mrs. Beauchamp."

" Certainly yours is a most melancholy case, and I must do my best. I have nine marriageable cousins, — you shall have your choice : the laws of the land forbid, or you should have them all, so much do I feel for you."

“Thank you,” he replied, joining in the general laugh.

“And what will you do for me, Mrs. Beauchamp?” asked young Carswell; “Miss Conyers will have nothing to say to me, despite all my wit and wisdom. Will you give me the second choice of your nine unmarried cousins?”

“I really cannot promise that, till you become more grave and steady. It would go against my conscience to recommend you as you are.”

“Grave and steady! out upon such slander! I will carry off one of the nine cousins from mere spite. It is very odd that no one gives me credit for gravity and steadiness; all describing me as a harum-scarum, and letting others go blame-free. I did not risk my life by running off with a beautiful girl whom I had never seen before, and on another man’s horse too, as some one else did. I tried to persuade Ralph Preston to prosecute for horse-stealing; but Susan prevailed on him to hush up the matter, on the promise of double the

value being paid for the animal,—being married the same day as Miss Conyers,—and other trifles, such as the wedding dress and dinner, and a snug farm in expectancy. If this is not compounding of felony, I do not know what is! But I despise all your malice! You shall see me a judge yet,—all gravity and decorum.”

“ ‘ A second Daniel come to judgment ! ’ ” exclaimed the lover, and the brother, in a breath.

Philip Conyers did not find the Grange as lonely as he had expected; perhaps for the sufficient reason that he rarely spent a day there without seeing Mabel, who still smiled upon him her own sweet happy smile, that said so much; showing him an undivided interest when Allan Beauchamp was not present; then, he knew, he must submit to be only second.

“ I declare I must marry ! Who would not to be so smiled on ? ” was his exclamation to his brother-in-law as Mabel turned from him to welcome her husband.

At first, there was some talk of Allan Beauchamp and his gentle bride having an esta-

blishment of their own ; but the idea was soon abandoned, as useless and extravagant. The owners of Beauchamp Park, the Grange, and Astell Court, all found good and sufficient reasons for insisting on the presence of Mabel, the petted child of all; retaining through life her trust in those she loved, her simple faith, her single-heartedness ; and, where she was, the others crowded round.

Old Ned was sorely puzzled for a time as to whose service he should enter. "He had lived at the Grange, and with a Conyers, boy and man, forty years ; and he loved the old place ; and he had carried Master Philip as a baby, and taught him to ride : but then, he was so fond of Miss Mabel, and she was so pretty, and so gentle, and so sweet-spoken ; and he did so like Master Elton, as he still often called him, who promised that he should be head-groom, and have the whole charge of Fury ; and somehow he had taken a fancy to the dumb creature !" Young Carswell, after much merriment at learning his perplexity, and bewildering him still more by arguments on

both sides, decided him on taking service with Allan Beauchamp, or rather his bride; declaring that any other choice would be an insult to the lady: but the honest fellow was at the height of his felicity when the perambulating household of his master was settled for a time at the Grange. Fury was still his pride; and an exploit of the animal's at a future period made him consider his sagacity as little less than his own, and greater than that of some others. Dawkins had not been frightened from evil deeds by his imprisonment. With admirable dexterity he contrived to steal Fury, though under double-lock and key; "but the animal could not bide him," old Ned said: certain it is, that he threw him, and then galloped back to his stable, neighing till he was readmitted. Dawkins was so injured by the fall as to die soon after; and the only unkind thing that old Ned had ever been known to say, was, "It sarved un right!" when told of his death.

The Beauchamps took charge of the fortunes of young Bonham, who became in time stew-

ard at Beauchamp Park. The village of Ranford, and the establishment at the Grange, were reformed on the model of those at Astell Court: yet so kindly and judiciously, that, after the first burst of indignation from its lazy inhabitants, few but the incorrigibly idle and vicious complained. Many a true word spoken in jest !

Philip Conyers married one of the nine cousins, at whose mention he had been so much amused ; and his forefathers were honoured in their descendants.

Young Carswell fulfilled his threat, and married another ; and in due time sat as a judge, esteemed and admired for his talent and integrity, in that very court where he had pleaded his first cause with the earnest zeal of friendship.

THE END.

LONDON :

PRINTED BY SAMUEL BENTLEY,
Dorset Street, Fleet Street.



1

